

***Tizita* (ትዝታ) and Democracy: A *Qiné* Hermeneutical Reading**

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Introduction

Tizita (ትዝታ) is one of the most popular songs in Ethiopia. Originally from the Amhara region, it is a song that has broken through ethnic and cultural barriers, generational divides, and confessional boundaries. It has been recorded and played countless times, and has become an emblem of Ethiopia's musical soundscape. If *tizita* is so popular, it is because it says something about our lives and hopes as Ethiopians, which it could reveal were we to ask the right questions.

Academic studies of *tizita* consider it a song of nostalgia.¹ I argue in this text that *tizita* has a surfeit of meanings that refer to affective, cognitive, aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions that counter the idea of nostalgia and indicate that it is a future-oriented song of resistance and freedom. To enable the reader to follow my arguments, I will in the first section briefly present the two pillars of my critical interpretation of *tizita*: *qiné* hermeneutical reading and the utopian tradition in Ethiopia.² The second section discusses the possible roots of *tizita*. The third section examines the emancipatory understanding of love that *tizita* articulates. The fourth section appraises hope as the utopian spirit that animates *tizita*. The final section marshals the arguments made in the previous sections to develop a critique of the hegemonic interpretation of *tizita* as a song of nostalgia.

Qiné hermeneutical reading strategies

Abandoning one's intellectual tradition is productive only if it is the outcome of an internal critique of the tradition itself. However, when one abandons one's intellectual tradition without a knowledge of what it is and adopts a wholesale uncritical embrace of an alien intellectual tradition, one confronts oneself and the world epistemologically naked and uses the borrowed knowledge as a blind man uses his white cane. Such is the situation in Ethiopian studies, a practice that one could call Gibbonism, and which explains the sterility of the social sciences in Ethiopia.³ The *qiné* hermeneutical practice that is central to the Ethiopian intellectual tradition has been unrecognized and excluded from the cultural formation of modern Ethiopian intellectuals and from the studies of Ethiopian society, politics, and history. Hence the need for this methodological prelude.



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The *qiné* hermeneutical tradition treats events, practices, institutions, discourses, and all that which is the result of human action and work as *nägär* (ነገር), i.e. as internally complex, contradictory, polysemous, tensioned, and incomplete phenomenon or *enkän* (እንክን), to use the *qiné* hermeneutical term.⁴ *Nägär* has complex *säm ena wärq* (ሰም እና ወርቅ, wax and gold) structures that make it non-transparent, making necessary a critical interpretative reading to unpack its meanings.⁵ *Qiné* hermeneutics has seven major reading strategies, which I discuss below briefly. They all involve what Colin Davis calls “critical excess” or “overreading,” that is, wrenching out from *nägär* its unsaid, interred, and repressed meanings. These are the surplus meanings of *nägär* of which even the author or the agent of the action may not be aware.⁶ The practice of “overreading” has deep roots in Ethiopia’s intellectual history, as one could see in the Ethiopian intellectual tradition of *qiné zäräfa* and of the interpretation of foreign ideas that transforms them “beyond recognition.”⁷

Qiné hermeneutics considers *tizita* songs to be *nägär*. A number of characteristics of the musical life of *tizita* attest to its *nägär* nature. First, every *tizita* singer has his or her own composition of *tizita* lyrics, thus bringing in complex personal, social, and political experiences as the specific fertile soil out of which the particular *tizita* lyrics sprout. Second, the reception of *tizita* among Ethiopians is so deep, long-lasting, and widespread that Francis Falceto notes, “today this song has become a veritable musical icon in Ethiopia.”⁸ The rich life history of *tizita* triggers an important question. What explains the exceptional longevity, versatility, and popularity of *tizita*? The answers, as we will see, point to its utopian surplus, i.e., to *tizita*’s future-oriented emancipatory surplus meanings that reverberate with the emancipatory aspirations of Ethiopians. To elicit these surplus meanings, I will treat *tizita* as *nägär* and subject it to the following *qiné* hermeneutical reading strategies: *andem* (አንድም), *tirgum* (ትርጉም), *zäräfa* (ዘረፋ), *hiss* (ሂስ), *enkän* (እንክን), *antsar nibab* (አንጻር ንባብ), and *wistä wäyra nibab* (ውስተ ወይራ ንባብ). Let me very succinctly explain these to help the reader follow my unpacking of the utopian surplus of *tizita*.⁹

Andem is the practice of developing as many interpretations as possible of *nägär* with a view to identify the best possible interpretation or to carry out an *andemta* (አንድምታ) or a “fusion of horizons” of the best possible interpretations.¹⁰ Each particular *tizita* is a *nägär* that has *andem* possibilities that need to be elicited. In addition, the numerous *tizita* compositions could be considered as *andems* of each other. Note that the concept of *andem* entails the rejection of

dualism.¹¹ *Tirgum*, which means translation, is of two kinds: *nätäla tirgum* (ከጠላ ትርጉም) and *yämist'ir tirgum* (የምስጢር ትርጉም). *Nätäla tirgum* is a literal translation of *nägär*. *Yämist'ir tirgum* is a critical translation that discloses the “secret” (ምስጢር, *mist'ir*) or the surplus meaning of the translated. Unlike *nätäla tirgum*, which limits itself to the literal meaning of *nägär*, *yämist'ir tirgum* brings out not only the unsaid and the repressed meanings but also the untranslatable in *nägär* as one of its surplus meanings. This untranslatable is the effect of the encounter with what *nägär* could be but is not-yet. The untranslatable shows, on the one hand, the limits of the current parameters of understanding and, on the other, demands a search for alternative parameters of understanding.¹² I argue below that an adequate understanding of *tizita* requires deciphering its *yämist'ir tirgum*. *Yämist'ir tirgum* works in conjunction with *zäräfa* and *hiss*. These are the tools of critical questioning, dislocation, transformation, and critical appropriation of a *nägär* to generate a more critical and open-ended understanding of it. *Zäräfa* and *hiss* always operate in conjunction with *antsar* and *wistä wäyra nibab*. *Antsar nibab* is a strategy of reading that demands distancing from the *nägär* (*tizita*, in our case) being studied and from oneself (the interpreter, in this case). This means that grasping adequately the surplus meanings of *tizita* requires distancing from subjective and objective sources that could limit or distort the interpretation of *tizita*, both as text and performance. *Wistä wäyra nibab* is a strategy of reading that requires interpreting traces, symptoms, signs, signals of what appear to be incidental or marginal in the *tizita* text or performance so as to disclose its unsaid, its unconscious or hidden infrastructure which is not immediately visible or audible but nevertheless inflects the meanings of *tizita*. *Tizita* must be subjected to *zäräfa*, *hiss*, and *antsar and wistä wäyra* readings to disentangle it from the non-mediated and fetishizing interpretations that reduce it to sentimentalism. *Enkän* refers to the incompleteness of *nägär*. *Tizita* as *nägär* is always incomplete (*enkän*) in that no single *tizita* could grasp the emotional, cognitive, social, and ethical dimensions of the subject of its song, hence the creation of new *tizita* lyrics by every new singer and for every new situation. Also, every interpretation of *tizita* is *enkän*. The notion of incompleteness or *enkän*, crucial for unveiling the surplus meanings of *nägär*, has its roots in the non-religious (but not anti-religious) secular Ethiopian culture whose seeds could be traced to the 17th century.¹³ Consider the following *qiné*.

ቸፋ ወልደ እግዚአብሔር ሽማግሌ ነህ አሉ, Benevolent God, it is said that you are a cloth weaver.

ያንተ ሽማግሌነት ምኑ ይደነቃል, but who could admire your skill?

ካንድ ወገን ስትሠራ ካንዱ ወገን ያልቃል, while you are weaving the cloth at one end, it comes undone at the other end.¹⁴

In depicting God as an incompetent laborer incapable of ever completing his work, the *qiné* makes a crucial point: the world is ontologically *enkän* or incomplete and non-teleological. It is open-ended, subjectively and objectively, creating a space for free human actions and for the possibility of creating a new and better Ethiopia and new and better Ethiopians. Before I discuss the utopian surplus of *tizita*, let me deal briefly with the objection that the idea of utopia is non-existent in Ethiopia, and that therefore to speak of utopia in relation to *tizita* is not warranted.¹⁵

1.2. The issue of utopia in Ethiopia

Since I claim that *tizita* has utopian surplus meanings and since the presence of utopia in Ethiopian history is a subject that Ethiopian studies have neglected due to Gibbonism, I will briefly consider the issue of utopia and its relevance to *tizita*. Utopian ideas in Ethiopia have risen primarily in the context of Ethiopian Christianity. One finds utopian ideas depicting the possible ideal way of life in Ethiopian heretic and messianic movements from the 13th century onwards (the Däqiqä Estifanos, the Ewostatewos, the Michaelites), in apocalyptic writings such as the 16th century ፍካሬ ኢየሱስ (*Fikare Eyesus*), and in the prophetic preachings of the *bahtawi* (ገህታዊ, itinerant monk).¹⁶ I will develop some of their utopian ideas through a *zäräfa* of Ernst Bloch's writings on utopia, which, in some respects, are relevant to Ethiopia, precisely because of the role religion plays in his utopian writings.¹⁷ The messianic spirit that one finds in certain currents of the Ethiopian Täwahedo Church and in Bloch's writings on utopia allows, despite differences, a fruitful *zäräfa* of some of Bloch's ideas on utopia.¹⁸ It is not without reason that Max Scheler wrote that Bloch's philosophy amounted to "running amok with God," and Siegfried Krakauer complained that Bloch was "fornicating with God..."¹⁹ One could say the same about Ethiopian heretic movements and *bahtawis*. Interestingly, the Ethiopian heretic movements and *bahtawis* often condemn the injustices of Ethiopian rulers and intimate a better society is possible but is not yet here, an idea that intersects with Bloch's notion of the "not yet."²⁰ In addition, Bloch's concept of the "multiversum" that he introduces "to do justice to the gigantic extra-European material" and his recognition that "it is no longer possible to work linearly, ... without a complex and new variety of time ...[and] a framework of a philosophy of the history of non-European cultures" makes his ideas open to *zäräfa*.²¹

What is utopia? Utopia is what the *qiné* tradition calls *minab* (ሞናብ)—the objectively possible society that is free from oppression and exploitation—as opposed to *yählm injära* (የሕልሞ እንጂራ) that translates literally as “the bread of dreams” or “bread made from dreams,” meaning a society that is impossible to realize.²² *Minab* is what Bloch calls “concrete utopia,” a society that concretizes the historically present subjective and objective “latencies of” and “tendencies to” emancipation.²³ To ensure that the idea of *minab* (concrete utopia) has contemporary relevance, I will borrow from Kebede Michael’s deeply critical contemporary poem *Yälibona silitané* (የልቦና ሥልጣኔ) the more modern and familiar word ሥልጣኔ (*silitané*), transform it through a *zäräfa* to mean *minab* (concrete utopia), which would be the case were one to work through and overcome the adversities, lacks, and negativities of social existence in Ethiopia that Kebede condemns in his poem.²⁴ The Ge’ez root word ሥልጣን (*silitané*) means dominion, authority, jurisdiction; and the modern Amharic word ሥልጣኔ (*silitané*) refashions its Ge’ez root word to mean civilization in the sense of a dominion of, or the authority of, or the jurisdiction of emancipation.²⁵ I fortify the emancipatory understanding of *silitané* (ሥልጣኔ) with a *zäräfa* of the Däqiqä Estifanos idea that the good society is one that cultivates “uprightness” and define *silitané* as emancipation: the construction of an “upright” Ethiopia wherein freedom, equality, justice, and the flourishing of each and all Ethiopians are embedded in the processes, values, practices, institutions, and expressions of political, social, economic, and cultural life and knowledge production.²⁶ *Silitané* is “emancipatory democracy,” which, for the sake of brevity, I will call henceforth *democracy*, always in italics, to differentiate it from liberal democracy (see section 3 below on the difference between the two). I will use *silitané* and *democracy* interchangeably.

Ethiopian history suggests that there are both subjective and objective tendencies and latencies in Ethiopian history expressive of *silitané*, even though, since the unsuccessful 1960 coup d’état, Ethiopians seem to have been caught in a Beckettian “Try again. Fail again. Fail better” in their efforts to build *democracy*.²⁷ The political upheavals and changes that have taken place since the 1960 aborted coup d’état have led to increasingly repressive regimes such that one could say the “Fail better” is yet to happen. However, the persistent effort to change Ethiopian conditions indicates the presence of an unrelenting desire for *silitané* or *democracy*, reflecting the fact that the desire for emancipation has deep roots in Ethiopian history. With the exception of the Awra Amba utopian community, the utopian roots of this desire are mainly in Ethiopian Christianity.²⁸

Christianity in Ethiopia is an “inheritance,” having been introduced in the fourth century. I understand inheritance in the Blochian sense: “not as a legacy of fixed tradition,” but “as the “undischarged hope-content and utopian content in the works of the past.”²⁹ As an inheritance, Christianity in Ethiopia expresses in some ways, to use Bloch’s vocabulary, the “conscience” of “the utopian function,” in that it has played an important role in Ethiopian history as the way of “venturing beyond the self,” both in ideas and practices.³⁰ In the 13th century, Lalibela, inspired by his Christian faith, projected to build the Earthly Jerusalem in Roha, asserted the equality of all who labour, asserted the importance of equal relations between rulers and the governed, and affirmed the necessity of the consent of the governed for a just rule; all of which are utopian ideas in the context of 13th century Ethiopia, even if he did not apply them in practice.³¹ The Däqiqä Estifanos, a heretical Christian community of the 15th century affirmed the necessity of the rule of law (በሕግ አምላክ *bähig amlak*, the God of Law / the Law of God), the equality and dignity of all (“standing upright”), and espoused a use conception of property as an alternative to the feudal ownership of property, all of which are utopian ideas in the context of the 15th century.³² Aba Ezra, a member of the Däqiqä Estifanos, asserts the equality of women and men and asks, “... is there any mystery that is given to men that women could not know? ”³³ A definitely utopian idea for 15th century Ethiopia.³⁴ The idea that “utopia” is present in Ethiopian society as a “latency” is what one can see in the 15th century claim that “Debre Tsion [The Heavenly City] is *already here*.”³⁵

A *qiné* hermeneutical reading of the Ethiopian messianic and apocalyptic literature also shows the presence of utopian ideas. The ፍካሬ ኢየሱስ (Fikare Eyesus), a widely spread messianic text composed in the 16th century (“before” or “after” the Grañ War, 1527-1543) describes the advent of a world of harmony and love between Ethiopians, between Ethiopians and nature, and the abolition of hunger, violence, injustice, inequality, oppression, and suffering, decidedly utopian ideas for 16th century Ethiopia.³⁶ One must also note that the *bahtawi* (ባህታዊ, itinerant monks) publicly denounce the suffering the rulers inflict on the people, and generally intermingle with their preachings apocalyptic prophecies and descriptions of the “blessed life” or salvation that awaits the chosen. Many have been persecuted for their stands against those in power.³⁷ We could interpret their preachings and the texts of the Däqiqä Estifanos and Fikare Eyesus à la Ernst Bloch’s interpretation of religion as bearing the “conscience” of “the utopian function,” and consider their religious idea of salvation as a safehouse for concrete utopian aspirations.³⁸

We may be tempted to consider the ideas of utopia that are present in the above historical examples as abstract. They are. However, we cannot deny the presence of utopian ideas in Ethiopian history and that religion in Ethiopia has been and still is a haven for utopian aspirations in the here-and-now. To grasp the utopian dimensions of Ethiopia's religious inheritance, we should consider it as *nägär* and pay attention to the influence of its discourses and practices on the secular culture and subjectivity of Ethiopians rather than limit it to its religious content. As *nägär*, *religious discourse and practice in Ethiopia cannot be reduced only to their religious content and their official role in society; it impacts the secular culture of Ethiopians and their subjectivity*. A *qiné* hermeneutical reading intimates that religion in Ethiopia has a this-worldly utopian surplus in that it is more “the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering” of Ethiopians and less an “opium for the masses.”³⁹ One of the tragedies of Ethiopian Studies is the excision, under the influence of Gibbonism, of the utopian surplus of Ethiopian religious culture. As Elleni Centime Zeleke points out, there is “a kind of consensus amongst some Ethiopianists that” the “Orthodox Christian culture” has a single offspring: “authoritarianism.”⁴⁰ However, one could argue that the authoritarianism that afflicts Ethiopia is rooted not in the “Orthodox Christian culture” but rather in the theoretical and political blindness Gibbonism has created regarding the utopian surplus of this culture.

The Ethiopian utopian imagination has also secular manifestations. The Awra Amba community founded at the beginning of the 20th century in the Amhara region strove to institute a concrete utopia or *silitané*: equality between men and women in all spheres of life, the recognition of the full rights of children, the abolition of gender-based distinction in labor and in the exercise of responsibilities, the implementation of a system of production, distribution, and consumption that respects the capacities and needs of every member, the institution of a social system based on free deliberation and consent, and the quest for ways to uproot the sources of oppression and exploitation.⁴¹ It must be noted that the utopian Awra Amba community was established by people of peasant origin, many of whom are illiterate, which attests to the presence of secular utopian ideas in traditional Ethiopia. Indeed, we see fleeting glimpses of utopian surplus meanings in the labyrinths and mazes of Ethiopian social practices, past and present. Thus, we see intimations of the concrete possibility for dignity, equality, solidarity and freedom in the traditional labour sharing (*däbo*, *wänfal*, *dafo*, *läfenty*, *jigge*, *mol'a*, *säddaka* and *bayto*) and mutual help (*iddir*, *kire*, *zakat*, *mahibär*, *iqqub*, *ezen*) associations.⁴² These function as a premonition of the emancipatory

but un-awakened future Ethiopian society that gestates within Ethiopian social practices. Although these associations exist in a society permeated by feudal values and practices, and currently, in a context of multidimensional inequalities created by the chaotic capitalist development in Ethiopia, they have certain internal structures and practices that generate the surplus meanings of freedom, equality, dignity, and responsibility. In both its religious and secular expressions, utopia in Ethiopia is the repressed dimension of Ethiopian history; it expresses the tendencies to and latencies of freedom, equality, and justice that incubate in Ethiopian conditions and social practices. These tendencies and latencies are summarized in the age-old aphorisms: *yäne bite* (የኔ ብሔር), meaning that the “I” in “you” and the “you in me” must take care of each other if we are to lead a life of freedom, equality, and justice. The other aphorism, umbilically attached to *yäne bite*, is *säw läsäw mädhanitu* (ሰው ለሰው መድሃኒቱ), meaning man is the cure for man (the Amharic term ሰው, *säw*, refers to both men and women). These aphorisms tell us that no Ethiopian is disposable and that every Ethiopian is a treasure for every Ethiopian. The aphorisms indicate that Ethiopian social practices have a utopian surplus that intimate a way of life radically different from the current one.

As Bloch points out, “a utopian surplus is carried over into the future.”⁴³ Given *tizita*’s rootedness in Ethiopian conditions, experiences and social practices, *tizita* could not be insulated from the utopian surplus of the religiously mediated and secularly generated ideas, experiences, and practices that have triggered the utopian imagination of Ethiopians since at least the 13th century. The utopian surplus transcends the social conditions and the hegemonic ideology in which it is imbricated and is carried over into the future and other *nägär*. One of these *nägär*, I argue, is *tizita*. Not to recognize this is to deprive *tizita* of the historical and cultural roots that nourish it. The neglect of these roots impoverishes our understanding of *tizita*’s meanings and of its potency. As we will see in the rest of this text, the utopian dimension is present as an emancipatory surplus meaning in *tizita* songs. Consider these *sineñ* (ስነኝ) from Mandingo’s *tizita*.⁴⁴

ሰው እንዴት ባለፈው በትናንት ይኖራል, how could one live in the past

ዛሬን በእጁ ይዞ ለነገው መሰላል, when one has in one’s hands the ladder for climbing tomorrow.

እልል በል ትዝታ ልርሳ በሽታዬን, rejoice *tizita*, I forsake you as my malady.

አትጋርድኝ ልይበት የነገን ተስፋዬን, don’t prevent me from seeing my hope of tomorrow ⁴⁵

Mikhail Bakhtin wrote that in language every sentence is a dialogue.⁴⁶ This is even more the case with Amharic which has refined through its *qiné* approach to composition and interpretation the art of semantic polysemy and creativity, extending and deepening the semantic carrying capacity of words, thus making dialogue and hermeneutics indispensable paths for understanding social practices, discourses, and relations.⁴⁷ Thus, translating an Amharic poem into another language is a perilous affair. Therefore, bear in mind this for all my translations of *tizita* lyrics in this text. The first line in Mandingo's *tizita* above rejects subjecting the present to the past (ሰው እንዴት ባለፈው በትናንት ይኖራል, *how could one live in the past*). The second line tells us “one has in one's hands the ladder for tomorrow” (ዛሬን በእጁ ይዞ ለነገው መሰላል); and that “climbing tomorrow” to build a better life is a real possibility. In this task of building an alternative to the present, *tizita* forsakes nostalgia (ልርሳ በሽታዬን) and *tizita* itself is mobilized as an enthusiastic agent of change in the third and fourth lines (እልል በል ትዝታ... *rejoice tizita*). One could say that the lines from Mandingo's *tizita* articulate a militant and combative hope (ተስፋ, see section 4 below) that projects an emancipatory vision of a better life as a tendency latent in Ethiopian life and that Ethiopians could grasp and implement.

2. In search of *tizita*

There is a difference between *tizita* as *qiñit* or scale and *tizita* as a song.⁴⁸ The origin of *tizita* as *qiñit* is shrouded in a historical mist, with some hypothesizing that it is as old as Ethiopian Christianity and others suggesting that Saint Yared composed it in the sixth century.⁴⁹ The origin of *tizita* as a song is not clearer either. Francis Falceto claims that his investigations show the lack of evidence for the existence of *tizita* before the middle of the 20th century.⁵⁰ A central piece of his evidence is the lack of recorded *tizita* music during the Italian occupation. However, an approach to the origin of *tizita* that considers the shared space of experience of religious and secular musical practices could give us a new perspective on the origin and nature of the song.

Melodically, of the four *kiñit* that exist in Ethiopia—*tizita*, ትዝታ; *bati*, ባቲ; *ambassel*, አምባሠል; *anchihoye*, አንቺ ሆይ—*tizita* seems to be the closest to certain *zema* (ዜማ) practices in *dägwa* (ደግዋ) or religious hymns, particularly the ናዑሥ መረግድ (*naoos märägäd*) tempo which is faster and less grave than the መረግድ (*märägäd*). One could also see a kind of melodic family resemblance with *araray* (አራራይ), one of the three modes of sacred chant (*ge'ez*, *izil*, *araray*) that Saint Yared is reputed to have composed.⁵¹ These claims appear to be speculative. However, given the centuries of intersections and overlapping between religious and secular songs during religious

and secular festivities throughout Northern Ethiopia, one cannot discount the possibility of traces of musical osmosis in style and content from religious to secular songs such as *tizita*. One of these auditory traces is embodied in the *masinqo*, the musical instrument that often accompanies *tizita* singing.⁵² A popular story has it that that God gave the *masinqo* to Ezra (there is no mention of this in the Book of Ezra) so that the Virgin Mary could traverse life (death, or purgatory, depending on the version of the story) without suffering, thus the popular poem on the *masinqo*.

እዝራ በመሰንቆ ዳዊት በበገና እያጫወቷት / Ezra with his masinqo, David with his begena
ሳትሰማው ሄደች ያን መላክ ሞት / accompanied Mary and saved her from death's suffering.

Despite its claimed divine origin, the *masinqo* has no role in religious singing. Nevertheless, the very apocryphal nature of the story points to the popular recognition of the existence of cultural pathways that allowed musical traces to cross over from religious singing to *tizita*. The *masinqo* is the musical instrument par excellence for *tizita*, more so than the *kirrar* (ክራር), often called the “devil’s instrument” for its role in lascivious songs.⁵³ The *masinqo*, with its subdued sometimes poignant, sometimes otherworldly, and sometimes introspective tone has a melodic timber that paints a sonancy that suggests meanings and feelings that go beyond what the lyrics of *tizita* say. It has the embracing and comforting sound of *zema* and feels as a balm which soothes the wounds of life, a melodic cure for the malady of Ethiopia, and a longing for a better tomorrow. It intimates an auditory prefiguration of a possible emancipatory alternative to the din of the oppressive here and now. No wonder that Ethiopian traditions give it a divine origin. In a sense, the sound of the *masinqo* is the covert sound of the utopian surplus of *tizita*.

Religious and secular festivities are possible bridges between religious songs and *tizita*. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which counts approximately 50 million followers of whom the great majority attend church services regularly, recognizes many yearly feast days dedicated to saints and angels.⁵⁴ In addition, there are also religious-cum-secular events such as *Enkutatash* (እንቁጣጣሽ, New Year), *Gena* (ገና, Christmas), *Timqät* (ጥምቀት, Epiphany), *Fassika* (ፋሲካ, Easter). On religious feast days, priests intone hymns and *debtäras* perform religious songs and dances, and the laity engage in secular songs and dances. Millions of the Church’s followers participate in these festivities. A *qiné* hermeneutical approach to these religious-cum-secular festivities as *nägär* suggests the existence of subterranean lateral relations and subtle musical affinities between religious musical culture and *tizita*. Another route of the lateral relations is the *däbtäras*, who are

the active educated lay members of the church and are specialized in the composition of religious *qiné* and performance of church music. They are known to contribute lyrics to popular songs such as *tizita*. The *qiné* intellectual culture and its practice of *sām ena wärq*, *andem*, *zäräfa*, *hiss*, *tirgum*, *enkän*, *zäybé*, *antsar nibab*, *wistä wäyra nibab* have percolated into Ethiopian literature, poetry, songs, and discourse mainly through the literary and musical works of the *däbtära*, which accounts in large measure to the well-known linguistic versatility and polysemy that characterize Amharic poems, songs, phrases and expressions. *Tizita* cannot arise and exist in isolation from the *qiné* culture and its profound impact on speech and writings in Amharic. In support of this claim regarding *tizita*, I will quote a passage from the Ethiopian musicologist Ashenafi Kebede and examine its implications. Ashenafi writes,

The Ethiopian emphasis on the study of poetry and versification becomes particularly noticeable when we realize that tradition attaches precedence to the meaning of song texts rather than to the accompanying melodies. It is the meaning that generally forms the basis of the Ethiopian aesthetic conception. Most traditional songs for example, consist of relatively repetitive melodies, while the texts contain varied stanzas, artfully interwoven with subtlety and ambiguity, which only the knowledgeable attentive listener can translate meaningfully. It is important to understand that the aesthetic element of Ethiopian music is traditionally governed by textual considerations.⁵⁵

It is not surprising that Ashenafi draws our attention to the “emphasis on the study of poetry and versification” in Ethiopian culture. He is referring, without mentioning it, to the *qiné* tradition wherein “the study of poetry and versification” is one of the main educational activities. When Ashenafi writes that “songs” have stanzas that are “artfully interwoven with subtlety and ambiguity,” he is tacitly referring to the panoply of *qiné* hermeneutical practices such as *sām ena wärq*, *andem*, *zäräfa*, *tirgum*, and so forth, that enable one to express oneself with a great deal of linguistic dexterity and “subtlety”—a quality *qiné* is well-known for. It is not then without reason that Ashenafi writes that the “aesthetic element of Ethiopian music is traditionally governed by textual considerations” and gives “precedence to the meaning of song texts rather than to the accompanying melodies.” This implies that in interpreting *tizita* one must treat its text as *nägär* and elicit its cognitive, social, political, and ethical dimensions in addition to its aesthetic aspects. *Antsar* and *wistä wäyra* approaches make possible such a reading by enabling us to step out from

the unthinking passions *tizita*'s melodies generate in the immediacy of listening to the song and from the hegemonic interpretation that reduces *tizita* to nostalgia. Given then, first, the possibility of lateral musical osmosis, mediated by religious cum secular festivities, from religious to lay music such as *tizita*, and second, given the *dābtära*-mediated influence in *tizita* compositions, it is more than probable that modern *tizita* songs have subterranean and lateral connections to the religious musical tradition. The *qiné* heritage, however diluted it may be by the passage of time, flows through the semantic and poetic arteries of *tizita*. Moreover, since *qiné* is known for its critical spirit, it is very likely that the critical spirit of *qiné* is also active in *tizita*. A *qiné* hermeneutical approach to *tizita* thus leads to a critical consideration of the relationship between the said and unsaid meanings of its songs, between *tizita* songs and the artists who compose / sing them, between *tizita* songs and the aspirations of Ethiopians, and between the temporal articulations of the past, the present, and the future of Ethiopia that *tizita* weaves. Let me first start with the lateral and subterranean influence of the traces of the religion mediated ideas in *tizita*. Consider the following lines from Kuku's *tizita*.⁵⁶

እኖራለሁ እንጂ በሶስቱ ሥላሴ, I owe my existence to The Trinity

መቼ እተርፍ ነበር እኔ በምላሴ, my words would have never saved me.

Kuku's first line (እኖራለሁ እንጂ በሶስቱ ሥላሴ, *I owe my existence to The Trinity*) appears to be, at first blush, a religious statement since it refers to the protection of The Trinity (ሶስቱ ሥላሴ). From the *qiné* hermeneutical perspective and the Ethiopian context in which it is sung, The Trinity in her *tizita* is an *afla zäybé* (አፍላ ዘይቤ) or a metonymy that points to two secular surplus meanings.⁵⁷ First, it leads to the idea of a "we" as "diversity in unity," a *wistä wäyra* meaning that emerges from the belief that the plural or the three figures of The Trinity form a united "we" in the sense that their unity is all embracing. Note that, in the present Ethiopian context, Kuku's use of The Trinity intimates a *wistä wäyra* aspersion of the post-1991 official moto of "unity in diversity." "Unity in diversity," a central element of the ideology of the Ethiopian ethnic federation, secretes a centrifugal logic, while Kuku's use of The Trinity secretes a *wistä wäyra* critique of "unity in diversity" from the perspective of "diversity in unity" derived from the secularized "we" of The Trinity. Second, her *tizita*, in singing that one cannot save oneself alone (መቼ እተርፍ ነበር እኔ በምላሴ, *My words would have never saved me*), harbors a surplus meaning that Ethiopians have to unite as a "we" against oppression if they are to overcome it and create *democracy*. Individually (እኔ

በምላሴ), they could neither defeat oppression nor build *democracy*. The *tizita* takes a detour through the Ethiopian religious culture and secularizes its idea of The Trinity as a collective “we” for emancipatory purposes in the here-and-now. In these lines we see how Ethiopia’s religious inheritance could serve as a sanctuary for secular emancipatory ideas. Also consider the following *sineñ* from Bezawork’s *tizita*.⁵⁸

እስላሙን ክርስትያኑን እንዲ እያዋሃደው, that which united Muslims and Christians
ማህተብ ነው ከዱሮ መክሮን የገመደው. the weaving of the fidelity thread of religion

Bezawork refers here to the centuries long peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia, threatened currently by the centrifugal 1991 Constitution, and secretes a surplus meaning that points to a template of unity. The *tizita* refers to the inter-confessional Ethiopian unity as one that was achieved through the faith of these religions that bind (ማህተብ...የገመደው) Ethiopians to each other. ማህተብ (*mahtäb*) is the black thread that Ethiopian Orthodox Christians wear around their neck as a sign of fidelity to their faith. Bezawork’s use of *mahtäb* transforms it into a secular symbol that performs a trans-religion crossover and uses this cross-over as a springboard for developing the secular ideas and practices of trust, solidarity, and diversity-in-unity among Ethiopians. In light of the fragmenting 1991 Constitution that has produced ethnic and confessional distrust, a *qiné* hermeneutical reading of her *tizita* indicates the presence of a surplus meaning that rejects the current Hobbesian conception of ethnic and religious differences. Her *tizita* projects the possibility of an alternative future where ethnicities and religions are not woves to each other but are bound together by a political *mahtäb* (ማህተብ) that affirms diversity-in-unity. The necessity of such an interpretative reading of *tizita*, advocated by Ashenafi, is what the following *sineñ* from Kuku’s *tizita* intimate.

ይሄኛው ተራራ ያንን እያገደው, this mountain is obstructing the other / your eye
የት ይታይ አካልህ ተርቆ የሄደው, how can one see you truly when you are behind the mountain / who is so far.⁵⁹

Kuku’s *tizita*’s lines constitute a critique of an unmediated understanding of *tizita* and is thus a rejection of a literal or transparent relation to *tizita*. The “mountain” (ተራራ) is the *säm* that hides or makes it difficult to reach the “*wäraq*” of *tizita*. The “now” of the listening of *tizita* is a “mountain” (ተራራ) barrier that prevents us, by immersing us in its immediacy, from seeing *tizita*’s

emancipatory potency and the alternative life it proposes; it restricts us to the limited horizon of the “now,” and keeps us, to use Bloch’s words, in the “darkness of the moment.”⁶⁰ To borrow the language of the Däqiqä Estifanos, it keeps us at the “foot” of the “mountain” and thus deprives us of a larger vision. We have a better view of our condition and of ourselves only by abandoning the “foot” of the “mountain” and “climbing to the summit,” to quote the Däqiqä Estifanos.⁶¹ Only then do we distance ourselves from the “now” and the hegemonic ideas that reduce *tizita* to sentimentalism. Only then do we discover an alternative horizon, vaster and richer. The new horizon we discover from the summit of *tizita*, as it were, reveals that which we were ignorant of when we were at the foot of the mountain: the possibility of a brighter alternative life. “At the foot of the lighthouse, there is no light,” says Bloch, or in the words of KuKu, ይሄኛው ተራራ ያንን እያገደው; *this mountain is obstructing the other / your eye*.⁶² In short, to understand *tizita* and grasp its surplus meanings, we have to take Ashenafi’s observations and their implications seriously. With the considerations of the preceding two sections as a background, I will examine the two constitutive elements of *tizita*, namely, love and hope, and discuss their significance as generators of *tizita*’s utopian surplus: emancipation.

3. Love is the ክብሮ (*käbäro*) of *tizita*

Love (ፍቅር, *fiqir*) is the central subject of all *tizita* songs. The song is about the loss of a loved one, be it a person, a nation, an ideal, a social practice, or an institution. Hence, the propensity to consider *tizita* as a nostalgic song. However, this characterization of *tizita* is based on limiting it to its *nätäla tirgum* which confined it to its *säm*, i.e., the reduction of love in *tizita* to the immediate emotions it evokes. This non-mediated experience of *tizita* occludes the utopian function and the related cognitive and ethical dimensions that inhere in it. To grasp this utopian function, it is crucial, as a first step, to unpack the meaning of love in *tizita*. The poet Debebe Seyfu’s use of ክብሮ (*käbäro*, drum) as a polysemous metaphor for *tizita* offers a path for mining the cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions as rhythms of *tizita* that are as important as its affective tempos.⁶³

ተንተርከኮ እሳቱ ነበልባል አብቦ the fire is burning and blooming

ኑ ደርቡት ሲለን ጃወዊን አቅርቦ come and stifle it with the blanket

የነና ያንቺ ልብ ሙቀት --- ከላ ኖሮ the warmth of our love, hidden

ይኅው የተረፈን: --- ቁርና እንጉርጉር: ዐመድና እሮሮ we are left with lamentations, ashes and

sorrow

ምቱ ውል የሌለው ትዝታ —ከበሮ. Beat the drum for a *tizita* that has lost its rhythm

The poem is deeply pessimistic, expressing the hopelessness triggered by the failures of the various contemporary political movements and struggles to bring about the positive transformation of Ethiopia and by the worsening socio-political conditions. I will however briefly operate a *zäräfa* on the poem (*qiné zäräfa* in *qiné* hermeneutics) to show that the apparent pessimism in the poem harbors a rejection of hopelessness. I will dislocate the last line (ምቱ ውል የሌለው ትዝታ --- ከበሮ, *Beat the drum for a tizita that has lost its rhythm*) and overread it in light of the first line (ተንተርክኮ እሳቱ ነበልባል አበቦ *the fire is burning and blooming*), which speaks on the face of it of love. However, when read in light of line 3 (የነና ያንቺ ልብ መቀት --- ከላ ኖሮ *the warmth of our love, hidden*), its *wistä wäyra* meaning points to the emancipation that the various struggles have failed to achieve. The stanza intimates an inner link between love and emancipation, whose possibility is being stifled (ኦ ደርቡት ሲለን ጃወዊን አቅርቦ *come and stifle it with the blanket*), such that “we are left with lamentations, ashes and sorrow” (ቁርና እንጉርጉሮ፡ ዐመድና እሮሮ). The last line’s reference to the “drum,” (ከበሮ, *käbäro*) that has lost “*tizita*’s rhythm” (ምቱ ውል የሌለው ትዝታ —ከበሮ) intimates that the *käbäro*’s loss of the rhythm of love is an incidental and free-floating *andem*, hence its presence after an *em-dash*. This means a *zäräfa* that grasps, awakens and tunes the *käbäro* to make it beat the rhythm it has lost, the rhythm of *tizita*, that is, of love and emancipation, is possible and appropriate. Thus, the *zäräfa* brings out a surplus meaning that rejects hopelessness and establishes a shared *käbäro* rhythm between love and emancipation as a constituent element of *tizita*.

The *käbäro* is a big drum used as a musical instrument, while a small drum called *atamo* (ኣታሞ) is used in secular songs. Note the significance of the poet using the term *käbäro*, which is used for religious singing, rather than *atamo* to refer to the rhythm of *tizita*, suggesting once more the tacit presence of a lateral subterranean link between *tizita* and the religious musical tradition, as discussed earlier. When the *käbäro* is played, its beats synchronize the body movements, the hand clapping, the dancing, and the voices of the members of the singing group as well as of the audience, binding them together rhythmically, and transforming them into a joyful community wherein freedom, equality and togetherness are palpable embodied experiences even if it is only for the fleeting duration of the song. Love is the *käbäro* of *tizita* in that what *tizita* does to its listeners is to evoke a love that like the *käbäro* reverberates rhythmically in the body and spirit of its singers and listeners and ushers them into a world where the musical experience of togetherness

secretes a consciousness of shared collective, affective, cognitive, and ethical commitment to the loved. I will henceforth call *love-käbäro* the love that is active in *tizita* as a militant force of togetherness and as a revealer of emancipatory possibilities.

Traditionally, there are three kinds of love: eros, philia, and agape. The first refers to sexual love, the second to brotherly love, and the third refers to divine love or the unconditional love that God has for humanity, and humanity for God.⁶⁴ *Love-käbäro* is neither eros nor philia, for both are circumscribed by the requirements of reciprocity. We can grasp the meaning of *love-käbäro* in *tizita* only if we understand it as a secularized political agape, which means that *tizita*'s conception of love is directed at all Ethiopians and guided by the unconditional active fidelity to the freedom, equality, dignity, and well-being of all Ethiopians. When I say that *love-käbäro* is political agape, I mean that it creates a bond, in the sense of *mahtäb* (ማከተብ) that we saw in Bezawork's *tizita*, among people based on and expressive of what Balibar calls "equaliberty": the inseparability of equality and freedom such that one cannot be diminished without negatively affecting the other.⁶⁵ The idea of equaliberty catches well the experience of the organic interdependence of equality and freedom as twins that share the same "heart," to borrow a word from Mahmoud Ahmad's *tizita* (see below), and who cannot be separated from each other without irreparably damaging both. *Love-käbäro* actively embodies equaliberty in that it expresses the practices of freedom and equality whose purpose is to ensure that their presence and development in Ethiopia is directly proportional to each other. In equaliberty, freedom is not used as a means or as a justification for generating socio-economic and political inequalities, as is the case in liberal democracy.⁶⁶ Nor is equality used to shackle freedom. We experience equaliberty—the mutual and equal interpenetration of freedom and equality—in *tizita*, as we shall see in this text. Such a substantive and egalitarian conception of the relationship between freedom and equality is radically different from the one that liberal democracy proposes. Whereas liberal democracy limits equality to the legal sphere (equality in the eyes of the law, equality of rights and opportunities) and freedom to "negative liberty," equaliberty asserts that equality and liberty are entangled socio-political relations that one could consider as the "two faces of a single constituent power," with neither having a political, an "epistemological," or an "ontological priority" over the other.⁶⁷ *Love-käbäro*'s aim is to pursue the creation of an Ethiopian society wherein freedom and equality are not the fetters of each other but work in tandem to ensure the flourishing of both.⁶⁸ "Fraternity [is]

the end result” of the practice of “equaliberty.”⁶⁹ Such an understanding of *fraternity* overcomes liberal democracy’s separation of equality from freedom, and of subject from citizen. To

differentiate “fraternity” rooted in equaliberty from the liberal democracy’s conception of fraternity, which depoliticizes it, I will write it in italics: *fraternity*.⁷⁰ *Tizita*’s love-*käbäro* is *fraternity* in action and is a constitutive element of *democracy* (*silitanê*), hence the difference between *democracy* and liberal democracy. I write *democracy* in italics to signify its difference from liberal democracy, as indicated in section 1.2 above. *Tizita* is a song of *fraternity* and by implication of *democracy*.

The love-*käbäro* of *tizita* generates an aesthetic, cognitive and ethical space of experience that creates the desire to care and be responsible for each other. Secular aphorisms such as ones discussed earlier— *yäne bite* (የኔ ብጤ) and *säw läsäw mädhanitu* (ሰው ለሰው መድሃኒቱ)—are expressions of love-*käbäro* or *fraternity*. As poet Debebe Seyfu puts it in his “ፍቅርና ተግባር” (Love and duty), love-*käbäro* creates a duty to others, with duty understood not narrowly as obligation but as ተግባር (*tägbär*, which means also a good deed), as a deed of *fraternity*, as an expression of a desire to do what is good and right.⁷¹ Consider the following *sineñ* from Mahmoud Ahmed’s *tizita*.⁷²

እስኪ አውሱኝ ለኔ ደህና ልብ ያላችሁ, those with a good heart, please share it with me
በልጅ እርቦኛል ጠጥቼ ጠምቶኛል, I ate but I am hungry, I drank, but I am thirsty
ሌሊት እየመጣ እንቅልፍ ይነሳኛል . I cannot sleep; it haunts me every night

The stanza asks those who “have a good heart” (love) to share it with him, because “one cannot live by bread alone.” Eating one’s fill and quenching one’s thirst, be it physical or intellectual, are not sufficient to “sleep peacefully” as long as love’s deeds (ተግባር, *tägbär*) are not activated as *käbäro*. His request that others “share their good heart” is a call for *fraternity*. The *tizita* intimates that Ethiopians are haunted by that which is missing (ሌሊት እየመጣ እንቅልፍ ይነሳኛል . *I cannot sleep; it haunts me every night*). What haunts Ethiopians is the absence of *fraternity* without which a community that creates the conditions that allow the flourishing of each and all cannot come into existence even if we meet our material and intellectual needs, for these needs themselves are different in nature and quality in a society where *fraternity* is one of its constitutive elements. The *tizita* lines above intimate that the adversities arising from “what is missing” could be overcome

were we to venture beyond our self-interests and private desires and discover that our emancipation is possible only when we “share” each other’s “good heart,” that is, when we trust each other and act in unison, as if we were bound together by the beats of *love-käbäro*. Hence, *yäne bite* (የኔ ብጤ) and *sāw läsäw mädhanitu* (ሰው ለሰው መድሃኒቱ) as expressions of *love-käbäro*. Once more here one could say that *tizita* rejects the “unity in diversity” ideology introduced in 1991 because the centrifugal effects of the institutions and practices based on this idea prevents *fraternity* and the “sharing of good hearts.” *Fraternity* is central to *tizita*’s notion of diversity in unity. It does not deny difference but rather makes difference a source of unity and universality as in Kuku’s and Bezawork’s *tizita* lines studied earlier. In this sense, Bezawork’s *tizita* line—ይህ ዘመን የማይሸረው ታሪክ ነው ትዝታ - *tizita is history that our era cannot abolish*—, affirms that oppression could never have the last word as long as there is *fraternity*.⁷³

As the above discussion suggests, *love-käbäro* has a crucial surplus meaning: that to love Ethiopia in the *käbäro* sense involves the effort to understand Ethiopian conditions, and that understanding Ethiopian conditions cannot be dissociated from the necessity to change Ethiopia for the better. This means that *love-käbäro* is a praxis; it finds its authentic expression in the beauty and rhythms of emancipatory knowledge, and in our decisions and actions to concretize *democracy*. Consider the following *sineñ* from Tilahun’s *tizita*.⁷⁴

ያሳለፍነው ዘመን ደስታን ያየንበት, our past was filled with happiness

ተመልሶ ቢገኝ አሁን ምናለበት, why not recreate it now

At first blush, one may hear in these lines a song addressed to a lost personal love. However, one must note that this loss is articulated as a loss of *zāmān* (ዘመን), which is a word that refers to a period, an era (as in the Amharic newspaper አዲስ ዘመን, *Addis Zāmān*, meaning The New Era). To refer to *zāmān* is then to refer to the Ethiopian community as a whole in terms of its temporality and conditions of existence. But since the entirety of the *zāmān* cannot be a “loved object,” given that each *zāmān* is a *nägär* and therefore heterogeneous and internally conflicted, the lost loved object has to be a fragment of a happy life that was present as a possible alternative way of life within the hegemonic oppressive *zāmān*, and which was prevented from flourishing. The *tizita* harbors then both a critique of the oppressive past and a desire for an intervention that awakens the repressed alternative way of life or the emancipatory future germinating in the past that the hegemonic order nipped in the bud and buried “undischarged.”⁷⁵ *Love-käbäro* as a praxis also

brings into play an ethical dimension that judges the desirable and the undesirable, the loveable and unlovable aspects of the old and of the projected new *zāmān*. Consider the following *sineñ* from Samson’s *tizita*.⁷⁶

ይገርመኛል ሰውነት ይሄ ዘመን አሁን ያለንበት, being human amazes me in this age
 የሰረቀው የሚከበር የሚከዳው የሚፈቀርበት, the thief is honored, the traitor is loved
 እሚፈቀረው የሚከዳ የተጎዳው ነው ባለ እዳ, the loved betrays and the victims is victimized

.....

ቆይ ለየትኛው ሰማችን መጨካክን መጋደሉ, in defense of what do we torture and kill each other?

Samson’s *tizita* has political and cognitive dimensions and harbors ethical judgments that are critical of our *zāmān*. He laments the degradation of Ethiopian life to a condition that honors the thief and the traitor, the torturer and the murderer, and punishes the victims. Samson’s *tizita* last line—*ቆይ ለየትኛው ሰማችን መጨካክን መጋደሉ / in defense of what do we torture and kill each other?*— expresses moral anger at the pandemic of political violence that is ravaging Ethiopia and the transformation of governance into what Mbembe calls “necropower”: the “subjugation” of Ethiopians “to the power of death” and the transformation of vast areas of Ethiopia—the areas inhabited by the Amhara, the Oromo, and the Tigreans—into “death-worlds.”⁷⁷ His *tizita* gives us a glimpse of the moral anger that traverses all *tizita* songs subterraneously. The philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum argues against anger in politics because she thinks “payback” or revenge is conceptually part of it and is therefore inimical to democracy.⁷⁸ Anger in *tizita*, however, is not revenge oriented. It is a moral anger that is a compelling source of motivation to unveil the truth of oppression, condemn wrong-doing, call for the praxis of *love-käbäro*, and pursue the construction of a just society. The moral anger in *love-käbäro* discloses that the monstrous ethnic politics devastating contemporary Ethiopia is the pathological warping of the unfulfilled desire whose rational but repressed kernel is *fraternity*. The aim of *love-käbäro* is to free Ethiopians from this pathological warping of an unfulfilled desire and create a fertile ground for *fraternity* and consequently for *democracy*.

I start this paragraph with a proviso to avoid a misunderstanding by reiterating what I said in section 1.2 about my reference to religion in this text: *the important thing is not the religious content of the passages, sermons and preachings I refer to but rather the ancillary secular impact these have on Ethiopian subjectivity and secular culture*. This said, in understanding the roots of

tizita's love-käbäro, one must also note the constant reference in Church sermons and *bahtawi* preachings to the Gospel of Matthew (10: 34-36) where Jesus says. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," and the Gospel of Luke (22:36) where Jesus tells his disciples "To go buy a sword." In Ethiopia where the Orthodox Church has millions of followers who regularly attend mass, religious events and ceremonies, religious discourse offers a window into what Ethiopians think and desire, and what they lack. Stripped of its religious dimensions and secularized as *fiqir* (ፍቅር), love in *tizita* has a cultural surplus that dislocates Biblical love and refashions it as a this worldly active, other regarding, caring, and combative passion. This secularized and combative understanding of love / *fiqir* inhabits *love-käbäro*. It draws its strength from Ethiopia's historical unconscious: the rhizomes of the non-spoken ensemble of polyphonous, polyrhythmic, non-synchronous, entangled, superimposed, and contradictory processes of Ethiopian history that have led to the formation and sedimentation of ideas, beliefs and values that often appear wearing the garbs of myths and legends, of popular aphorisms and riddles, of religious beliefs and superstitions, of magical formulae and spirit possession, and of songs and stories.⁷⁹ These function as the source of "tacit knowledge" and the cognitive and ethical aquifer from which Ethiopian social practices, including love in *love-käbäro*, draw silently their cognitive, moral, and aesthetic sustenance.⁸⁰ The formation and sedimentation of Ethiopia's historical unconscious has deep subterranean historical roots: the rise and fall of the Axumite empire (3rd to 10th century) and of the Zagwe dynasty (10th-13th century); the Grañ war (16th century); the turbulent relations with Roman Catholicism (1571-1632); the significant demographic intermingling and the far-reaching cultural cross-pollinations and symbiosis of the Oromo and the Amhara that earnestly started in the 16th century with the expansion of the Oromo into northern Ethiopia and the counter-extension of northern Ethiopians into Southern and Southwestern Ethiopia in the 19th century; the doctrinal debates, partly theological and partly political, within the Church that were finally resolved in the Council of Boru-Meda (1878); the role of the Church in the war against the Mahdists (1889) and in the two wars (1896, 1935) against Italy, wars in which the Church was mobilized for spiritual support; and the presence of the Church in the numerous festivals in which Ethiopians participate regularly.⁸¹ This complex, polyrhythmic, polyphonic, nonsynchronous, and contradictory processes have created deep and wide-ranging trans-ethnic "cultural *métissage*" and political synergies as well as entangled sedimentations of ideas, beliefs and values that, though invisible and inaudible, exist as

the “tacit” historical and cultural aquafer of Ethiopian social practices.⁸² *Tizita’s love-käbäro* and hope (see section 4 below) feed tacitly on the repressed emancipatory ideas, aspirations, and desires that inhabit this historically formed historical unconscious.

In *tizita*, *love-käbäro* is a philosophy of praxis. Thus, activism and commitment, decision-making and interventions are its key elements. Consider the following lines from Bezawork’s *tizita*.⁸³

ደጉን ፊት ደቅኖን ሁሉን የሚረታ, *tizita’s* kind / loving face defeats all

...

እንደሰው ለገንዘብ ቦታዊን አይለቅም not even money can dislodge it

...

ዘመን ደህን ሰንበት መንግደህ ጉድ ያግኝህን, depart our era [of suffering], your path is troubled

ብድርም የለብኝ እኔም አልሸኝህም, I owe you nothing, nor will I bid you good-bye.

Bezawork’s song first tells us that *tizita* has a kind and loving face that defeats all (ደጉን ፊት ደቅኖን ሁሉን የሚረታ, *tizita’s* kind / loving face defeats all). And it adds, not even money can dislodge it from its loving goodness (እንደሰው ለገንዘብ ቦታዊን አይለቅም). An interesting line in light of the massive corruption that capitalism with an ethnic attire is fueling in Ethiopia. In the last two lines smolders a moral anger—the anger of the good person (ደጉን ፊት ደቅኖን)— that tells the era (*zämän*) of suffering to depart. Despite the moral anger that lurks in these lines, there is no reference to revenge; however, it praises active resistance to power whose *afla zäybé* or metonym is ገንዘብ (*gänzäb*, money). The expulsion of the era (ዘመን) of pain is categorical (ብድርም የለብኝ እኔም አልሸኝህም, *I owe you nothing, nor will I bid you good-bye*). The refusal to say good-bye is an act that denies the era of oppression the dignity of recognition; it is a decision that marks a clean break with and a total denunciation of the oppressive system; it clears the ground of the detritus of despair and suffering and makes freedom the air Ethiopians breathe and *fraternity* the engine of their actions. *Tizita* wields the “sword” of *love-käbäro* not to punish those who inflict suffering but to create a *democracy* that liberates Ethiopians, including the oppressors, from the exploitative and oppressive system. The transformative idea of love that *tizita* exudes in *love-käbäro* could be captured through a *zäräfa* of Che Guevara’s words: “Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love.”⁸⁴ For *tizita*, Ethiopians who build *democracy* (*silitané*) are “guided by strong feelings of love” for Ethiopians, an idea encapsulated in the

aphorisms — *yäne bite* (የኔ ብጤ) and *säw läsäw mädhanitu* (ሰው ለሰው መድሃኒቱ). To borrow the language of the 15th century heretics, the Däqiqä Estifanos, love in *tizita* is a praxis that struggles to “reach the summit,” which is the space of *fraternity*, of beauty and reason, of faith and commitment, of justice and dignity, creating a fertile ground for the flourishing of *democracy*.⁸⁵ The *love-käbäro* of *tizita* founds the militant and collective hope that *democracy* can be achieved in Ethiopia. The poet and novelist Abe Gubegna articulates the intimate relation between *love-käbäro* and militant hope in his poem ለላምታ (Greetings):

ፍቅር የሁሉ ሰው ህብት, love is the wealth of all
የዓለም ሕዝብ ሁሉ ንብረት, the asset of the people of the world
ለሁሉ እምነትና ያለህ በረከት, your abundant grace is available to all
አንተ ነህ ተስፋ ሕይወት, you are hope and life
ሰላም ለክ, and the measure of peace⁸⁶

4. Hope is the spirit of *tizita*

“ራእይ ባይኖር ሕዝብ መረን ይሆናል” (“Where there is no vision, the people perish”)⁸⁷ ” A *zäräfa* of this passage from the Proverbs allows us to reformulate it as “Where there is no *hope* (*täsfa*, ተስፋ), the people perish.” The first point to make here is that hope in *tizita* is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The second point is that hope in *tizita* is collective and militant because it is the people’s hope. Consider the following *sineñ* of Mahmoud Ahmed’s *tizita*.⁸⁸

ትዝታ ነው አሉን የሀሳብ መርከብ, *tizita* is the ship that carries thoughts
ትዝታ ነው አሉን የጭንቀት መርከብ, *tizita* is the ship that carries sufferings
ማራገፊያውማ እኔ ነኝ ወደቡ, I am the destination where *tizita* unloads itself

The ship (መርከብ, *märkäbu*) is a “metaphor cum metonymy” that refers to hope as a “travelling” process or a “sailing” over the rough seas of Ethiopia’s actual and hidden adversities.⁸⁹ Ethiopia is the ship, and its destination or port (ወደብ, *wädäbu*) is the creation of a *democracy*, a society without oppression and exploitation (without ጭንቀት, *chinqät*). Hope in *tizita* recognizes Ethiopia’s oppressive political, economic, ethnic, epistemic, and cultural conditions and works against them in pursuit of the *democracy* that the hegemonic order excludes as impossible while repressing it at the same time. The second and third lines suggest that we traverse and confront our history both

as a repertoire of oppressive conditions and as a carrier of past emancipatory aspirations and struggles that were defeated but still haunt Ethiopian society.⁹⁰ We maneuver at the same time through the present and disclose from it the contents of the emancipatory latencies and tendencies germinating in it. *Tizita*'s aim is to unveil the possibilities of *democracy* that gestate in the repressed zones of Ethiopian history, past and present, and make them one of the foundations of hope. However, since Ethiopian history is polyrhythmic, polyphonic and composed of various nonsynchronous entangled strands, the path of the "ship" is hazardous and not predetermined though its desired destination is *democracy*. The three *tizita* lines taken together intimate the presence of "Not-Yet-Conscious," which is the not-yet conscious subjective dimension of emancipation that must be awakened.⁹¹ The "Not-Yet-Conscious" could be subjected to *zäräfa* to mean what *qiné* hermeneutics calls ቅጽላ (*qisäla*), one of whose meanings is an intellectual search to unearth and bring to consciousness ideas and possibilities that are not yet consciously apprehended. One place where the "Not-Yet-Conscious" glimmers as a "pre-appearance" of emancipation is in Ethiopian poetry. Ethiopian poetry, inheritor of the subversive and critical strand of *qiné*, has been a vehicle of the regimes' unsayable, of dissent and of emancipatory desires, and a persistent and flickering flame of hope and *love-käbäro* in the darkness of oppression weighing on Ethiopia.⁹² Consider this explosive poem, a shimmering pre-appearance of the "Not-Yet-Conscious" of the desire for emancipation, by Aleqa Taye (1853-1916), written a century before Ethiopia tiptoed into a "modernisation" that was weaponized as an instrument of oppression:

እንኳን በግር ብረት ቢያገቡኝ በገንድ / putting me in irons and in prison
 መጨመር ነው እንጂ በእሳት ላይ ባሩድ / is throwing gunpowder into fire
 በጣም እንዲቃጠል አጥብቆ እንዲነድ / intensifying and expanding its flames
 የተሰወርውም እንዲሆን ገሃድ / rendering the invisible visible
 እኔ ላምላክ እንጂ ለሥዕል አልሰግድ / I bow only to God and not to images.⁹³

The poet defies the imperial oppression of the time and expresses his unflinching commitment to emancipation. He "fears only God," (last line). But as we shall see in Madingo's *tizita* discussed below, *tizita* challenges even God if He sets limits that become obstacles for emancipation. Ethiopian poets were and still are the heralds of the "Not-Yet-Conscious" emancipatory ideas and

possibilities, way before politicians and theoreticians are aware of them. The “Not-Yet-Become,” which is, according to Bloch, the correlate of the “Not-Yet-Conscious,” is the objective possibility of societal transformation present in Ethiopia’s material conditions but simmers therein unbeknownst until Ethiopians uncover and grasp it to create *democracy*.⁹⁴ The “I” (ማራገፊያውማ እኔ ነኝ ወደብ; *I am the destination where tizita unloads itself*) in Mahmoud Ahmed’s *tizita* is the *afla zäybé* or metonymy for Ethiopians, who as a “we,” have to bring to light through praxis the “not yet” subjective and objective conditions necessary to build *democracy*. Ethiopians, as the subject of hope of *tizita*, construct the “ship” and determine its path while at the same time traversing the rough seas of Ethiopia’s conditions. That is, hope in *tizita* is a praxis and projects the possibility of a radically different future and moves us to work towards it, even if present conditions seem intractable. In *tizita*, hope is the militant emancipation of consciousness.

Since 1974, Ethiopia is trapped in a vertiginous maelstrom of ethnic, political, economic, and social overlapping crises, conflicts, and oppression. The question then arises, a question that every *tizita* song alludes to: Is the Ethiopian situation hopeless? *Tizita*’s answer is Ethiopians cannot afford to dispense with hope. It may well be that hope, to be hope, has to state that under present conditions *democracy* is impossible and affirm at the same time that it is however necessary and must be resolutely pursued. Hope, to be emancipatory, has to demand that which is impossible within the hegemonic parameters of hoping, thinking, and acting. Hope’s aim is precisely to change these parameters and bring new ones that make emancipation thinkable, rational, and feasible, an aim a poetic song by Betty G (Bruktawit Getahun) captures beautifully:

አዲስ ሰማይ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ / A new sky on Ethiopia
 አዲስ ፀሃይ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ / A new sun on Ethiopia
 አዲስ ዝናብ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ / A new rain on Ethiopia
 አዲስ ሃሳብ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ / A new idea for Ethiopia
 ይንገስ ኢትዮጵያ ላይ / Let these reign in Ethiopia⁹⁵

In affirming the impossible *democracy* as necessary, hope gives audibility and visibility to the *democracy* that appears impossible under present conditions. *Tizita*’s hope (ተስፋ, *täsfa*) draws its strong belief in the possibility of making the impossible possible from the deep roots it has in Ethiopia’s historical unconscious as well as from the aspirations for *democracy* that throb in the heart of the present. One could see the historical and cultural subterranean roots of hope in the

various declinations of *täsfa* in names Ethiopian parents give to their children; for example, *Täsfaye*, *Tesfu*, *Tesfaneh*, and so forth, asserting the hope for better times, or the practice of appending a saint's or an angel's name to *täsfa* when naming a child, for example, *Täsfä-Mariam* (the hope of the Virgi Mary), *Tesfa-Michael* (the hope of archangel Michael), and so forth. Making *täsfa* the root-word of a child's name expresses the deeply rooted belief that hope has powers that could be mobilized to overcome adversities and to create an alternative way of life. In all cases, using *täsfa* (hope) as an element or a prefix of a name conveys the surplus meaning that no oppression by an earthly power could extinguish a people's hope that is driven by the desire for a life without oppression. Hope in *tizita* outlives oppression. Bloch's description of hope comes close to grasping *tizita*'s understanding of *täsfa*: it is an “expectant counter-emotion against anxiety and fear, *is therefore the most human of all mental feelings and only accessible to men, and it also refers to the furthest and brightest horizon.*”⁹⁶ In the Ethiopian context where anxiety and fear have become the very air Ethiopians breath, the use of *täsfa*— “*the most human of all mental feelings and only accessible to men*”— in names is a *zäybé* (ዘይቤ) or a sign of the desire to fight off fear and anxiety and aim for “*the furthest and brightest horizon*”: *democracy*. *Tizita* is irrigated by this understanding of hope. However, one cannot exclude uncertainty from hope. One cannot exclude failure. To use Mahmoud's word for hope, the ship (መርከብ) could go astray, break up, be captured by hostile forces, never reach its port (ወደብ), or throw anchor at the wrong port. Oppressors could appropriate hope for pacifying the people by creating false hopes.⁹⁷ These are risks *tizita*'s hope confronts. Nevertheless, as Mahmoud's *tizita* intimates, *tizita*'s hope is not extinguished by failures, for to struggle until it reaches its destination is inherent to what it is. *Tizita*'s lesson is that hope that does not struggle against adversities is not hope. Consider the following *tizita* lines from Mahmoud Ahmed .⁹⁸

ትናንትናን ጥሶ ዛሬን ተንተርሶ, cutting through yesterday and leaning on today

ነገንም ተውሶ አምናንም አፍርሶ, borrowing from tomorrow and demolishing yesteryear

These *tizita* lines point to hope as a continuous praxis that works through the entanglements of the recent past (ትናንትና, *tinantina*), the present (ዛሬ, *zare*), the future ነገ (*nege*), and the distant past (አምና, *amna*). Hope works dynamically through the entangled anti-emancipatory obstacles and emancipatory possibilities of these temporalities, hence the use of active verbs to describe hope's work: cutting through (ጥሶ, *tisso*), leaning on or pushing (ተንተርሶ, *tentersiso*), borrowing (ተውሶ,

tewiso), demolishing (አፍርሶ, *afriso*). The *tizita* secretes the idea that hope is not a substitute for action but an active emancipatory spirit that is embodied in actions. The hope of creating a new Ethiopia is an active process that involves working through conflicts and obstacles occasioned by the presence of the “non-contemporary in the contemporary” and the interests linked to them, which in Ethiopia involve feudal, pastoral, ethnic, and capitalist temporalities and interests, since all of these are simultaneously present, superimposed, and entangled.⁹⁹ As the active verbs in the above *tizita* lines indicate, hope is present as an active guide for the Ethiopian imagination and reason to reveal the subjective and objective possibilities of the *democracy* that could be brought into existence through the actions of Ethiopians as a “we.” Consider the following *sineñ* from Madingo’s *tizita*.¹⁰⁰

1. አቅም አለኝ ብሎ የሰው ልጅ ቢሰፍርም , if counting on his abilities, man defies limits
2. ታሰበ አልታሰበ ከልኩ አያልፍም, he meets defeat, despite his efforts to succeed
3. አግኝቶ ላያገኝ ወይ ጠቅሞ ላይጠቅመዉ, getting becomes loss, benefit becomes debt
4. ሰው ለምን ይኖራል ትዝታ ሲያደክመዉ, why live and bear the tiring burden of *tizita*
-
5. እገነባለሁ ብዬ ድካሙ ቢያመኝም Even if rebuilding my house makes me tired and sick
6. ለፈረሰዉ ቤቴ ሳለቅስ አልገኝም I will not cry/regret my demolished house
7. ያለፈን ላይቀይር በከንቱ ይለፋል, despite loss and unrewarding effort /tries to achieve the impossible
8. መቼም ሰው ደፋር ነው ፈጣሪን ይጋፋል, man in his courage even defies God.

Note the creative contradictions between the first four lines and the last four lines. They indicate that hope in *tizita* has full cognizance of the adversities confronting it (the first four lines) and yet accepts the challenge and the risks involved in struggling for emancipation (the last four lines). Madingo’s *tizita* refers to thwarted efforts (ከልኩ አያልፍም), to gains that turn out to be losses (አግኝቶ ላያገኝ), and to benefits that become liabilities (ጠቅሞ ላይጠቅመዉ). The adversities appear so insurmountable that one may even be tempted to question one’s existence (ሰው ለምን ይኖራል). The *tizita* raises the issue of hope and hopelessness under oppression. Is there hopelessness lurking in this *tizita*? Yes, but it is hopelessness that draws from within itself the courage to beget a militant hope. Such a stand could be described in Gramsci’s words as “pessimism of the mind; optimism

of the will.”¹⁰¹ In lines 4 and 5, *tizita* says that out of repeated defeats arises the question of why one should continue living (ሰው ለምን ይኖራል ትዝታ ሲያደክመው, *why live and bear the tiring burden of tizita*). *Tizita*’s hope confronts this question squarely. In line 6, *tizita* refuses to cry over the calamities and failures of the past. In line 7, it recognizes that efforts to achieve emancipation may look like trying to achieve the impossible when seen in light of the various defeats but asserts in line 8 that demanding the impossible is what makes a human being human. In lines 7 and 8, *tizita* rejects pessimism and defeatism and admires the courage of the person who armed with hope defies even God in pursuit of what s/he wants to achieve (መቼም ሰው ደፋር ነው ፈጣሪን ይጋፋል, *man in his courage even defies God*). The *mist’ir tigrum* or *wärq* of this defiance of limits set by others—the regime, circumstances, or God (ፈጣሪን ይጋፋል)—is that Ethiopians, being *enkän* (incomplete), are free and can achieve what within and for the prevailing order, which itself is *enkän*, appears improbable. In Madingo’s *tizita*, hope reminds Ethiopians that only through their actions could they overcome fear and despair and create a better world or *democracy*. Consider Mikael Belayneh’s *tizita*.¹⁰²

መንፈስና ሥጋ የተዋጉ ሊታ, when the soul and the flesh are at war

አልፎ የሚያገኙበት ጥበብ ነው ትዝታ, *Tizita* is the wisdom [the victory of soul over the flesh]
that embellishes

Michael’s *tizita* invokes a conflict between the soul and the flesh intimating a number of important ideas. Hope does not drop from the sky. It is the fruit of a battle, described in the above lines as a “war” between “the soul and the flesh,” between the *sām* (flesh)—the acquiescence to the extant order—and the *wärq* (the soul) which is committed to emancipation. The popular expression to describe a fundamentally good person in Amharic is, “*näfs näw* (ነፍስ ነው),” meaning he is a “soul.” Note that this Amharic expression gives the word “soul” a secular social and not a religious meaning—“soul” is perceived as a social comportment of a person expressive of the good and the right. It is this secular social meaning of soul that *tizita* articulates. The utopian demands of the Ethiopian soul—the good and the right—are incompatible with the oppressive and exploitative life in Ethiopia, identified as “flesh” (ሥጋ, *sigä*) in the *tizita*. The “soul” (ነፍስ, *näfs*) and not the “flesh” is the site of hope. The “flesh” refers to private interests and pleasures, whereas the “soul,” as the carrier of emancipatory demands and ideals, is the dwelling place of emancipatory hope. In the second line, the victory of the soul over the flesh is described as “ጥበብ” (*tibäb* / wisdom).

According to *qiné* hermeneutics, “ጥበብ” (*tbäb* / wisdom) is knowledge (*ዕውቀት* / *ewqät*) that is conjugated with the good and right (*ዕውነት* / *ewnät*). “ጥበብ” (*tbäb*) is the inner headlight of hope that shines its path towards *democracy* and serves as a critical mirror to *tizita* itself. Hope infused with *tibäb* is, to appropriate Bloch’s expression, “educated hope” or “comprehended hope.”¹⁰³ The education of hope is a cognitive, ethical, and affective process that peels away the *säm* of the ideological and Gibbonist discourses on Ethiopia’s conditions and future, and brings to light the *wärq* or the “not-yet”; that is, the subjective and objective emancipatory latencies and tendencies that must be grasped to pursue and achieve *democracy*. *Täsfa* guided by *tibäb* is educated hope. Its aim is to trigger the agency of Ethiopians in building bridges that link their emancipatory aspirations with the objective possibilities of emancipatory transformation gestating in Ethiopian reality. For *tizita*, the education of hope is a critical polyphonic dialectical process that takes place at the intersection of hope, desire, truth, work, destiny, wisdom, chance and life as Mikael Belayneh’s *tizita* tells us.¹⁰⁴

ቅኔ ነው ትዝታ፣ ዜማ ነው ትዝታ, *tizita* is *qiné*, *tizita* is *zema*

ጥበብ ነው ትዝታ፣ ሕይወት ነው ትዝታ, *tizita* is wisdom, *tizita* is life

.....

ህይወት ና ተስፋ፣ ምኞት ና እውነት, [tizita is] life and hope, desire and truth

ስራና አጋጣሚ ኑሮ ና እጣፋንታ, work and destiny, life and chance

In passing, let me note that earlier we saw how the *käbäro* mediates between religious and secular music (*tizita*). Note once more how *tizita* is associated with Ethiopian religious culture, particularly with *qiné* (ቅኔ) and *zema* (ዜማ), suggesting, as pointed out in section 2 above, lateral and subterranean connections between the religious and secular musical traditions. This said, consider how in the above lines Mikael articulates *tizita* with hope, life, desire, wisdom, work, destiny and chance, all within a context that frames *tizita* as *qiné*. Hope as the praxis-oriented emancipation of consciousness permeates all aspects of life: *ህይወት ና ተስፋ፣ ምኞት ና እውነት / ስራና አጋጣሚ ኑሮ ና እጣፋንታ / life and hope, desire and truth / work and destiny, life and chance*. The framing of *tizita* as *qiné* shines light on the intelligence of *love-käbäro* and of educated hope, and their abilities to mobilize “desire and truth,” “work and destiny,” “life and chance,” and agency in the pursuit of *democracy*. *Tizita* sings that, to use Bloch’s expression, “something is missing” in the life of contemporary Ethiopians.¹⁰⁵ The something that is missing has created conditions of suffering and wounds that

have been festering since the failed coup d'état of 1960. *Tizita* sings about our wounds not to dwell on them but to consider them, to paraphrase Rumi, as windows through which the “light” of *love-käbäro* and of educated hope enter us.¹⁰⁶ The wager of *tizita* is that educated hope in conjunction with *love-käbäro* can marshal these wounds as sources of motivation to open up pathways for eradicating the malignant forces and conditions that caused the wounds and bring to life the something that is missing, i.e., *fraternity* and in its wake *democracy*. The hope (*tesfa*, ተስፋ) that emerges from Mikael’s *tizita* rejects the oppressive and exploitative ideas of life, work, desire, knowledge, chance, and hope purveyed by the hegemonic order. Consider the following *tizita sineñ* from Tilahun Gessesse that links educated hope to commitment.

አይከዳሽም ልቤ ሰው መከዳት አያውቅም , my heart will not betray you
 እስኪለያይ ድረስ ከለቅሶ ከሳቅም , even if tears and laughter forsake it
 ያሳለፍነው ዘመን ደስታን ያየንበት, the years of happiness we spent
 ተመልሶ ቢገኝ አሁን ምናለበት, would it that they come back¹⁰⁷

To say, *I will not betray you / አይከዳሽም ልቤ ሰው መከዳት አያውቅም*, is to make a commitment. One commits oneself to perform a particular future act and endorses the obligation to oneself and others to bring to fruition the promise. *Tizita*’s hope is also a promise of emancipation that makes trust an element of hope. If we consider the protagonist of the above lines as the *afla zäybe* or metonym for Ethiopians, we could say that the promise is one that Ethiopians make to themselves and to each other to achieve what they have hoped to accomplish: *democracy*. Such a promise involves a trust in oneself that one will abide by what one has promised to do and a trust in others that they will abide by what they have promised to do. The cultivation of these two dimensions of trust is part of the education of hope. Trust is one of the political, moral and psychological bulwarks with which hope fortifies itself against failures, setbacks, regime repressions, betrayals, and other vicissitudes that hope encounters in the course of its pursuit of *democracy*. From this angle, hope in *tizita* is a covenant that binds (ማህተብ / *mahtäb*, to use Bezawork’s *tizita* word) Ethiopians together as a moral-political “we” engaged in the active pursuit of a better society, committed to overcome the obstacles on their path. That the third line says—*ያሳለፍነው ዘመን ደስታን ያየንበት, the years of happiness we spent*—does not mean, as one may hastily deduce, a restoration of the past. It is a recognition that the emancipatory potential of the past (*ደስታን ያየንበት, the years of happiness*), though repressed, is not exhausted. It is an expression of trust in what Ethiopians in the past have

done in the pursuit of emancipation even if it is the case that their emancipatory efforts have become part of the history that has not happened, i.e., “surplus history.”¹⁰⁸ *Tizita*’s remembrance of the silent past aims to appropriate the emancipatory aspirations that were crushed and use them as a trampoline for an emancipatory transformation of Ethiopia in ways that respond to the aspirations of the present and that do not stifle the continuous unfolding of emancipation in the future. Consider also the following lines from Bezawork’s *tizita*.¹⁰⁹

ሕይወት ዞራ ዞራ ተቁማ ትዝታ, *Tizita* the witness of life’s wandering
 ድሮን አይቶ ማድነቅ የሰከኑ ሊታ, Fatigued, we look at and admire the past
 ደጉን ማስታወሻ ባይኖረው ትዝታ, *Tizita* is a remembrance of the good
 ነገን ባልተመኛት ሰው የዛለ ሊታ, Even in fatigue it makes one remember tomorrow

“Even in fatigue (ሰው የዛለ ሊታ),” *tizita* remembers “the good” (ደጉን ማስታወሻ ባይኖረው ትዝታ / *Tizita is a remembrance of the good*) embedded in the repressed emancipatory possibilities of the past as an anticipation of a different tomorrow (ነገን ባልተመኛት...). Bezawork’s *tizita* draws our attention to the fact that the alternative past and its repressed alternative future are part of our life (ሕይወት ዞራ ዞራ...) though it has become a silenced history that exists only as “surplus history.” Her *tizita* intimates that maintaining hope does not come easily under existing conditions and one could be fatigued because of the repeated defeats of hope. However, a *qiné* hermeneutical reading considers fatigue (ዛለ, *zalä*) as *nägär* and discloses that Bezawork’s *tizita* articulates a double temporality in the experience of fatigue (ነገን ባልተመኛት ሰው የዛለ ሊታ, *Even in fatigue it makes one remember tomorrow*): the desire for a better tomorrow in the midst of one’s present fatigue. *Tizita* thus depicts fatigue as a condition that is internally tensioned between resignation and hope. The hegemonic order tries to create historical inertia through a unitary homogeneous temporality that transforms time into mere duration where change is confined to managing and perpetuating the existing interests of power. Hope that fits with this hegemonic temporality is a false hope, a way of postponing change that goes to the roots, and a weapon to disarm the people’s aspiration for *democracy*. Changes that change structures and processes without changing the existing relations of oppression could create political fatigue expressed in that awful popular phrase: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (The more things change, the more they stay the same). However, political fatigue disguised as resignation surreptitiously makes it possible to skirt the obedience the hegemonic order expects of its subjects. The line, ድሮን አይቶ ማድነቅ የሰከኑ ሊታ / *Fatigued, we look at*

and admire the past, suggests that one still has the ability to recognize that which is good and right. Precisely because of the presence of this ability, “I would prefer not to” could be the seemingly polite answer of the “fatigued” Ethiopian to some of the demands of the existing order.¹¹⁰ However, at the same time, this fatigue-occasioned break in the hegemonic order (“I would prefer not to,”) opens a crack for the emergence of a new political imagination, even if it is in the form of “daydreams.”¹¹¹ The *tizita* line, ነንን ባለተመኛት ሰው የዛለ ሊታ / *Even in fatigue it makes one remember tomorrow*, tells us that even in fatigue, tomorrow could appear as a potentially new beginning and become a target for and a subject matter of hope.

The radical and militant understanding of hope constitutive of *tizita* is integral to Ethiopia’s history. According to the Däqiqä Estifanos, the 15th century heretical movement, known for their uncompromising critique of ecclesiastical and imperial powers, hope drives man to that which is essential to him as thirst drives one to water.¹¹² They conceive hope as a force that overcomes the obstacles that prevent the actualization of “peace” and “holiness.”¹¹³ The religious terms in which they couch hope should not obscure the important critical idea they intimate—that hope is a militant partner of reason and ethics in the criticism of power and in the quest for an emancipated society (*Debre Tsion*, in the language of the Däqiqä Estifanos).¹¹⁴ Ethiopian history has a hidden face, its surplus history, which is a repository of the hunger for a way of life in which each and all Ethiopians “stand upright,” to use the Däqiqä Estifanos term. One sees the *zäybé* (ዘይቤ) or symptoms of this desire for an alternative way of life in Lalibela’s effort to build the Heavenly City of Jerusalem in Roha, in the rise of the religious myth of *Debre Tsion* in medieval Ethiopia, in the various peasant uprisings, in individual revolts (ሸፍታ, *shifta*), in the rise of anti-power heretical movements and *bahtawis*, in the emergence of anti-feudal student movements (20th century), in military *coup d’états* (1960, 1989), and in ethnic and regional armed oppositions (Weyane 1943, 2020-22, Gojjam 1960s, Bale 1960s, ONLF 1994, OLA 2018..., Fano 2023..., etc.) to the hegemonic order. True, all these anti-power movements are *nägär* and as such are made up of contradictory and entangled streams of emancipatory, non-emancipatory, and anti-emancipatory ideas and forces. Nevertheless, they all intimate the presence of hope trying to grasp the subjective and objective conditions that gestate the tendencies for and the latencies of change, which, if subjected to *zäräfa* and worked through the emancipatory needs of Ethiopians, have elements that could be appropriated to sow the seeds of emancipation. The inconclusiveness or failures of emancipatory actions in the past does not mean that emancipatory hopes were false or

meaningless. Rather it means that hope is a learning process that requires commitment and patience, and that it must be subjected to critique to enrich and propel itself forward more effectively as educated hope.

Finally, I want to use the word ተግዋር (*tä'amir*) meaning “miracle” to bring out the power of hope in *tizita*. Educated Hope in *tizita* aims to make Ethiopians “miracle makers.” This is not an over-ambitious aspiration for it has roots in the historical Ethiopian quest for an alternative society. Most markedly, this idea is latent in the Chronicles of Lalibela.

The chronicler, who is obviously unable to explain the construction of Lalibela's remarkable rock churches, has recourse to a tale of *miracles* and attributes the construction of the ten large churches hewn out of the living rock to the help of “angels”.¹¹⁵

A *qiné* hermeneutical analysis considers the “angels” the *afla zäybé* (metonymy) of the Ethiopian workers who have achieved what the era considered impossible: the gigantic rock-hewn churches. The surplus history that inhabits silently Ethiopian history intimates that Ethiopians have the capacity to be miracle-makers that could transform all facets of Ethiopian society or as Mikael Belayneh's *tizita* puts it: ህይወትና ተስፋ፣ ምኞትና እውነታ / ሰራና አጋጣሚ ኑሮና እጣፋንታ / *life and hope, desire and truth / work and destiny, life and chance*. That is, Ethiopians have the capacity to transform the very nature of desire, knowledge, work, society, destiny, culture, love and hope such that *democracy* could become the air that Ethiopians breathe. It is of interest to note that one finds this 13th century Ethiopian idea that human beings have the capacity to be miracle makers in Hannah Arendt, the well-known twentieth century philosopher. She writes,

If the meaning of politics is freedom, that means that in this realm—and in no other—we do indeed have the right to expect *miracles*. Not because we superstitiously believe in miracles, but because human beings, whether or not they know it, as long as they can act, are capable of achieving, and constantly do achieve, the improbable and unpredictable.¹¹⁶

Ethiopian history is strewn with “improbable and the unpredictable” emancipatory struggles that exist as part of the past that is made invisible by that portion of the past that has imposed itself as history. “The improbable and the unpredictable” constructions of Roha are harbingers of the concrete miracles that Ethiopians are capable of making. Hope in *tizita* draws inspirations from the repressed emancipatory past through the “tacit” mediation of the Ethiopian historical

unconscious.¹¹⁷ Hope's aim is to awaken the "Not-Yet-Conscious" and grasp the objectively possible emancipatory transformation and bring about emancipatory processes and events that, to use Arendt's words, "burst into the context of predictable processes as something unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable."¹¹⁸ Wasn't the short-lived 1974 Revolution (January 1974-June 1974) such a "miracle" before the army vandalized and banalized it into a military regime?¹¹⁹ Though conditions in Ethiopia make it seem impossible to bring about emancipatory transformation now, *tizita*'s hope tells us that Ethiopians could become historical "miracle makers" and construct *democracy* even if it appears in the present oppressive conditions "something unexpected, unpredictable, and ultimately causally inexplicable." Recall Madingo's *tizita* line, መቼም ሰው ደፋር ነው ፈጣሪን ይጋፋል, *man in his courage even defies God*, discussed earlier. In *tizita*, educated hope conjoined with courage is, as Bezawork puts it in her *tizita*, "a hero" who is a miracle maker (ትዝታ ጀግና ነው ሁሉን ድል ይነሳል, *tizita is a hero who defeats all*).¹²⁰ This does not mean voluntarism. As one could surmise from the discussion in the above sections, *tizita*, in its pursuit of *democracy* through the coordination of *love-käbäro* and educated hope (*täsfa* guided by *tibäb*), articulates emancipatory will with emancipatory knowledge.

5. Critique of *tizita* as nostalgia

Consider the following *sineñ* from Madingo's *tizita*:

ባለፈ አመት ዝናብ ዛሬ አይታረስም, one does not cultivate with the rain of the previous year

...

ለምን በትዝታ ኑሮዬን እገፋለሁ, why should I let nostalgia govern my life¹²¹

We see in these lines a deliberate orientation towards the future without either denying the past or dwelling on it. It does not present the past as totally bereft of useful things. It recognizes its beneficial events (the rain). However, one should not count on the "rain of the previous year" for a better harvest in the future. Good things might have happened in the past, but one should not shackle oneself to their memories: ለምን በትዝታ ኑሮዬን እገፋለሁ, *why should I let nostalgia govern my life?* asks Madingo's *tizita*. The *tizita* articulates a forward-oriented intellectual and ethical stand and exudes the idea that Ethiopians should be the masters of their future.

However, the current understanding of *tizita* in academic studies is dominated by a backward looking interpretation of *tizita* as nostalgia.¹²² Woubshet writes, "At bottom, *tizita* is a ballad about the memory of love loss."¹²³ Timkehet Teffera, the Ethiopian musicologist, translates *tizita*

as “nostalgia” and proceeds to examine the etymology and historical usage of the word “nostalgia” in the West.¹²⁴ *Tizita* as nostalgia is a *nätäla tirgum* (ነጠላ ትርጉም) of *tizita*. It is interesting to note that Timkehet, who espouses the nostalgia interpretation of *tizita*, considers briefly a non-nostalgic interpretation.¹²⁵ However, the reach of her brief tangential drift remains limited by her foundational understanding of *tizita* as nostalgia. But why is *tizita* captured by the nostalgia interpretation? To answer the question, we need to consider the contemporary Ethiopian context.

After the collapse of the January 1974 revolution and in the absence of a *democratic* alternative, there took place, for the first time in Ethiopian history, a regression from national to ethnic identity which led in 1991 to the establishment of an ethnic federation that offered a breeding ground for ethnic nostalgia with dreams of restoration of past ethnic glories, encouraged by the right of ethnic secession that the 1991 Constitution enshrined in its article 39. The result was the proliferation among the major ethnicities of what one could call, following Boym, “restorative nostalgia,” which

proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. .. This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals...[It] engages in the antimodern mythmaking of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past.¹²⁶

Restorative nostalgia is at the heart of post-1991 ethnic revival in Ethiopia. It advocates the creation of ethnic territories, engages in the bricolage of traditions and rituals, promotes the idealization of the past, and exhibits a “paranoic determination” to solidify ethnic identity and establish ethnic homelands, with the whole process drenched in mythmaking and what Boym calls “a romance with one’s own fantasy.”¹²⁷ The exemplar in Ethiopia of this mythmaking and “romance with one’s own fantasy” is Oromummaa.¹²⁸ Though Oromummaa is the extreme case of restorative nostalgia, almost every major Ethiopian ethnic community is engaged in this “homesickness for the past.” A tragic case of restorative nostalgia is the secession of Eritrea based on a homesickness for a fantasized nation based on mythmaking about being colonized by Ethiopia. The catastrophic outcome of this “romance with one’s own fantasy” that rendered Eritreans historically blind is a ruthless dictatorship, which should be a warning to Ethiopian ethnicities that cultivate restorative nostalgia. In *tizita*’s case, which is the subject matter of this

text, *tizita* as nostalgia is an instance of the generalized “homesickness” in post-1974 Ethiopia for the fantasized Ethiopia as a united and harmonious nation.

To see the meaning gap between *tizita* and nostalgia, it helps to explore the Ge’ez and Amharic semantic fields of *tizita* and see how a forward-oriented spirit rather than nostalgia is semantically related to it. The word *tizita* (ትዝታ) does not have a particular Ge’ez word as a root. However, taking a clue from Desta Tekle Weld’s Ge’ez Grammar and Dictionary, one could locate *tizita* in a Ge’ez semantic field delineated by ተዘውወወ (*täzäwäwä*, to play, to talk, to divine), ዘከረ (*zäkärä*, to remember actively, to foresee), ዝረከተ (*zkrät*, to think ahead, to anticipate, to reflect), ዝከር (*zikir*), which Desta translates as *tizita* which, however, conjoins remembering the deceased with hope in salvation in the sense of feeling sad for the departed but entertaining the hope that they will be in paradise (ገሳት, *gänät*), with the emphasis on the latter.¹²⁹ In Amharic, *tizita* is located in a semantic field that articulates it with ተዓዛ (*taaz*, order, obligation, both future oriented), ተዘ (*tiz*, active remembering that could be followed with action), ተዝታ (*tizita*, memory or nostalgia), ተዘበት (*tizbet*, moral judgement).¹³⁰ What is interesting is that in both Ge’ez and Amharic, *tizita* is related to a complex interrelated but differentiated practices that articulate active remembering, anticipating, knowledge, reflecting, obligation, hope, and moral judgement. In both its Ge’ez and Amharic semantic fields the surplus meanings of salvation and of past-rooted future-orientedness hover as *tizita*’s *yämist’ir tirgum* or surplus meaning. *Tizita* is *nägär* and therefore complex, internally tensioned, and forward-looking. When *tizita* looks back, which it does, it is not to dwell on the past, but rather to appropriate what the past offers for the pursuit of a better future. It is precisely the historical thickness, complexity, and cultural depth of *tizita* as *nägär* that have led singers like Mikael Belayneh and Bezawork to characterize it as *qiné* and *tarik* (history).

Tizita as a song of *love-käbäro* and hope has no truck with the myth of an “ideal Ethiopian nation” fantasized by Ethio-nationalists as a harmoniously united nation. Rather, it recognizes that the 1974 revolution has dissolved the old feudal Ethiopian society for good and created a radically new “space of experience” where ethnic disunity has replaced the monarchic unity of Ethiopia. In the absence of an emancipatory project, this new space of experience has created a “horizon of expectations” saturated with ethnic and nationalist nostalgia wallowing in a romanticized past.¹³¹ Hartog points out that “The past speaks to us, as long as we know how to question it.”¹³² Ethiopian history could disclose *tizita* as a call for emancipation were we to “know how to question” it. The

nostalgia interpretation of *tizita* could be seen as a failure on the part of Ethiopian nationalists to address the appropriate questions to Ethiopia's past. Let me add here parenthetically that the failure "to know how to question the past" is also true for ethnic nationalists, and the historical distortions created by this failure have bred restorative ethnic nostalgia and the infatuation with ethnic identity and territory that have commandeered Ethiopian politics since 1991 and intensified the processes of oppression and transformed politics into an arena of unbridled ethnic violence. But here, I limit myself to the issue of *tizita*.

What Ethiopians who believe that they have "lost Ethiopia" in the ethnic fragmentation established by the 1991 Constitution could do is engage in a "mourning" of their "lost Ethiopia" instead of falling into nostalgia. "Mourning," writes Freud, "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as *one's country*, liberty, an ideal, and so on."¹³³ In mourning, a person relates to loss externally, which means that despite the pain of the loss, the person acknowledges the changes brought by the loss and engages with the new post-loss reality dynamically. Mourning involves "reality-testing" that shows that the lost "loved object," has become obsolete. *Tizita* provides the occasion for such mourning. *Tizita's* mourning, however "painful" the loss may be, is a process that enables one to go beyond mourning itself. In *tizita's* work of mourning, "respect for reality gains the day," and one "becomes free" and ready to confront and tackle the new Ethiopian reality and subject it to one's emancipatory projects.¹³⁴ *Tizita* uses mourning as a launching pad for *love-käbäro*, educated hope, and emancipatory actions. When Ethio-nationalists refuse to "mourn" the fantasized "lost Ethiopia" and develop a cathexis for it," their capacity for "reality-testing" is disabled and their ability to imagine and rationally conceive a *democratic* Ethiopia as an alternative to both ethnic federation and centralism is immobilized. *Tizita* thus collapses into nostalgia that verges on "melancholia."¹³⁵ Nostalgia is pathological; it prevents one from going beyond grief, paralyzes the emancipatory will, inhibits confronting reality effectively, and blocks one's ability to transform it. It results in the euthanasia of *love-käbäro*, hope, reason (ሃሳብ / *hassab* as in Mahmoud Ahmed's *tizita*), and emancipatory vision. Let me open here a brief parenthesis to point out that the same logic of "mourning" applies to ethnicities engaged in restorative nostalgia. Mourning the mythical ethno-nation that ethno-nationalists live as a "lost loved object" could neutralize the destructive fantasy that feeds restorative nostalgia, allow "reality-testing," and enable ethnicities to engage in the constructive and emancipatory work of building *democracy* in Ethiopia.

In short, *tizita* uses mourning as a steppingstone to go beyond mourning and projects itself into the future. It encourages Ethiopians not to be drowned in nostalgia but rather to reject it and tackle the real question they face: How could they come together, think, imagine, work, and act to make Ethiopia a land of *democracy*? The question demands that we step out intellectually, politically, ethically, and aesthetically from the current Ethiopian space of oppression and the deadly epidemic of “homesickness for the past” it has spawned. *Tizita* invites Ethiopians to take this stepping out through the praxis of *love-käbäro* and educated hope and the emancipatory knowledge and actions such a praxis generates. Consider the following *sineñ* from Bezawork’s *tizita*.¹³⁶

ትዝታ ጀግና ነውሁሉን ድል ይነሳል, *tizita* is a hero who defeats all
 ሲያሸው ታዛዥ ሆኖ ሲመችው ይንግሳ, sometimes it is humble and other times majestic....

 ትዝታን ታማኝ ነው ወረትን አያውቅም, *tizita* is a loyal and not a fickle friend

Bezawork’s sings *tizita* as a “hero, (ጀግና) who is victorious against adversities. The hero and the heroine mourn their loss but they do not succumb to nostalgia. Defeat fortifies their commitment to the assumed cause. The hero and the heroine have their eyes on the tasks ahead and pursue them without fear. *Tizita* is such a hero (ትዝታ ጀግና ነው); it recognizes the past but does not shackle itself with nostalgia; it is resolute and loyal; defeats fickleness (ወረት) and betrayal (ታማኝ ነው). Bezawork’s *tizita* abjures nostalgia.

The personification of *tizita* as a hero in the line—ትዝታ ጀግና ነውሁሉን ድል ይነሳል, *tizita* is a hero who defeats all—as an *afla zäybé* for Ethiopians, inviting them to become forward-looking, *love-käbäro* wielding, educated hope articulating heroes (ጀግና) that build *democracy*. As heroic builders of *democracy*, *tizita* asks Ethiopians not simply to perform a break with Ethiopia’s history of oppression but also change the very notion of history such that only those processes, actions, and events relevant to the emancipation of Ethiopians count as history, and all anti-emancipation processes, actions, and events count as pre-history, as a temporality of oppression from which we have to extricate ourselves. In other words, *tizita*’s hope of *democracy*, when realized, should change our very understanding of history and of being Ethiopian, that is, it should operate an *andem* (አንድም), and not be a simple break within the linear narrative of Ethiopian history and given identities. The nostalgia interpretation of *tizita* and the restorative nostalgia it cultivates put us in

a situation of recycling the dangerous understanding of political change as a change of the ruler. In this understanding of change lurks the Ethiopian feudal culture of power: political change understood as changing the ruler. This practice has given Ethiopia a political system wherein only the leader counts: Haile Selassie, Mengestu, Meles, Abiy. In all these cases, Ethiopian society becomes an echo chamber of the ruler's words and actions: these are treated as the political, normative and cognitive yardsticks of Ethiopian society.¹³⁷ This is a phenomenon I have called elsewhere the Zära Yacob syndrome.¹³⁸ The nostalgia interpretation of *tizita* thus harbors an authoritarianism that is music to the ears of those in power, for it neuters *tizita* and strips it of its emancipatory potency. Presently, Ethiopia faces a choice between the common ruin of the contending ethnicities—the Oromo, the Amhara, the Tigreans, and the Somali—and the emancipatory *democratic* reconstruction of Ethiopian society. *Tizita* resolutely hopes to resolve this choice through the construction of *democracy*

The 15th century Däiqä Estifanos, despite the unimaginable tortures they suffered at the hand of Emperor Zära Yacob, stood “upright” and claimed that it is the duty of each to “leave the foot of the mountain” (the era of oppression) and strive “to reach the summit” (the era of emancipation), whatever may be the adversities one encounters on the way.¹³⁹ *Tizita* resurrects, reconnects with, and renews this combative and emancipatory hope and love for a bright future that has been fermenting in Ethiopia for centuries. The surplus meanings of *tizita* lyrics examined in this text indicate that *tizita* is a song of liberation from nostalgia, fear, pessimism, hopelessness, and the corrupting influences of oppression. *Tizita* is a revolutionary song: a song of resistance, freedom, courage, commitment, and an invitation to create a new Ethiopian society. We can thus borrow from Mandingo's *tizita* and sing, “እልል በል ትዝታ...” “rejoice *tizita*”.¹⁴⁰ The hope of *tizita* is to make Ethiopians “miracle makers” who transform Ethiopia into a *democracy*. To understand *tizita* as nostalgia is to sing one's own *musho* (ሙሻ, dirge) at one's own funeral while still alive.

NOTES

¹ Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *A Song of Longing: An Ethiopian Journey*, (Champaign, IL., University of Illinois Press, 1994); D. Negga, Tezzeta, le souvenir et la nostalgie. Sentiments doux-amers dans les musiques du monde. Edited by Michel Demeuldre. (Paris : L'Harmattan. 2004), pp. 33 – 42; Francis Falceto, *Tezeta dans la musique populaire éthiopienne. Sentiments doux-amers*, Edited by Michel

Demeuldre. pp. 43 - 44. Paris: L'Harmattan (2004), pp.43-4; Timkehet Teffera, “Canvassing Past Memories through "Təzəta," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, December, Vol. 46 (2013), pp. 31- 66; Elleni Centime Zeleke, *Ethiopia in Theory* (Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 19-23. I discuss below the question of *tizita* as nostalgia.

² On *qiné* hermeneutical reading and the utopian tradition in Ethiopia, Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics and Ethiopian Critical Theory* (Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers, 2021), chapters 1-6. Since this book is the first and only study of *qiné* hermeneutics, I cite it often in this text.

³ Maimire Mennasemay, “Epistemic Autonomy, Gibbonism, and Ethiopian Studies,” *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol XV, 1&2 (2021), pp. 3-50.

⁴ Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutic*, *op.cit.* pp. 147-151. (a) ነገሩ ነገር ነው ውስጡ ጥቅጥቅ ነው (*Nägäru nägär näw wustu tiqtiq näw*): That which is *nägär* is *nägär*, for it is internally crowded; or a thing is a thing, but is internally dense. (b) ነገሩ ነገር ነው ውስጡ ጉፊጉፊ ነው (*Nägäru nägär näw wustu gourangur näw*): That which is *nägär* is *nägär*, for it is diverse/of different colors inside; or a thing is a thing but is internally heterogeneous and tensioned. Hence, the need for interpretation.

⁵ The discussion in this section draws on Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.* chapters 1-6. These chapters bring out the fatal misunderstanding of *säm ena wärq* popularized by Donald Levine’s mechanistic interpretation. Donald D. Levine, *Wax and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

⁶ Colin Davis, *Critical excess: overreading in Derrida, Deleuze, Levinas, Žižek and Cavell* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). If as Gadamer claims, “understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well,” overreading a *nägär* is necessary in order to unlock and understand it actively. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 296.

⁷ Sumner points out in his study of Ethiopian philosophical texts from the Axumite period and from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “Ethiopians never translate literally: they adapt, modify, add, subtract. A translation therefore bears a typically Ethiopian stamp: although the nucleus of what is translated is foreign to Ethiopia, the way it is assimilated and transferred into an indigenous reality is typically Ethiopian. [...] it is transformed beyond recognition.” Claude Sumner, *Classical Ethiopian Philosophy* (Los Angeles: Adey Publishing Company, 1994), p. 51. On *qiné zäräfa*, Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.* pp. 99-104.

⁸ Francis Falceto, “Tezeta, Ethiopian Blues & Ballads,” *Ethiopiennes CD Album* (Buda Musique Series (2007).

⁹ For a detailed discussion of *qiné* hermeneutical reading strategies, Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-191.

¹⁰ On *andemta*, Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-185; on “fusion of horizons,” Hans-Georg Gadamer *Truth and Method*, (New York: Continuum, 2004/2006), p. 537ff.

¹¹ Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 49-73.

¹² An alternative parameter of understanding requires an alternative parameter of socio-political existence to make the “untranslatable” accessible.

¹³ Aleksander Ferenc, “Writing and Literature in Classical Ethiopic” in B.W. Andrzejewski, S. Pilaszewicz, W. Tyloch, eds. *Literatures in African languages: theoretical issues and sample surveys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 255-300.

¹⁴ Balambaras Mahteme Selasse Welde Mesqel, አማርኛ ቅጂ (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1955 E.C.), p. 156, no. 400.

¹⁵ Messay Kebede, *Survival and Modernization, Ethiopia’s Enigmatic Present: A Philosophical Discourse* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1999), p. 220. He writes, “It is no surprise, then, that the Ethiopians never created a social utopia. Since each person had an untouchable share, the idea of perfecting the social system from below could only appear as an attempt to cause disorder by questioning the wisdom of God’s allotment. What should worry human beings was less the nature of their share than the certitude of being in their apportioned places.” His claim is belied by the existence of Ethiopian messianic literature wherein freedom, equality, love, and justice are the constitutive principles of the ideal society they project. Welde Tsadiq Tekle Giorgis, ፍካሬ ኢየሱስ (Addis Adaba, ኤዞፕያ፣ 2013).

¹⁶ Getachew Haile, “Ethiopian Monasticism” (2012). *HMML Lectures*. 5.

https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/hmml_lectures/5 Accessed 5/19/2025; Krzysztof Piotr Błaśewicz, “Ethiopian Monasticism” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* XII/2 (1999), 31-46. Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ፣ በህግ አምላክ (*Däqiqä Estifanos: BāHeg Amlak*), trans. from Ge’ez to Amharic by Getatchew Haile. (Collegeville, MN. 2004); Welde Tsadiq Tekle Giorgis, ፍካሬ ኢየሱስ (Addis Adaba, ኤዞፕያ፣ 2013). Ethiopian regimes are highly suspicious of bahtawis for they consider their preachings to be subversive. One case among many is the arrest of Bahtawis’ Gebre-Meskel Haile-Meskel and Bahtawi Sofonias Gume. Amnesty International Report 1998 - Ethiopia | Refworld

¹⁷ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986); Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Ernst Bloch, *The Heritage of Our Times* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991); Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer: Als Theologie der Revolution* (München: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1921).

¹⁸ Loren Goldman, *The Principle of Political Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 83. On the *Däqiqä Estifanos* and *bahtawis*, see the various discussions in the text. Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp300-320. Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.*

¹⁹ Quoted in Loren Goldman, *The Principle of Political Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 83.

²⁰ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, pp. 292-3; Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 191. Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.* Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp.300-320.

²¹ Ernst Bloch, “Differentiations in the concept of progress,” in *A philosophy for the Future* (New York: Herder and Herder. 1970), p.143.

²² Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp.229-259.

²³ On concrete utopia, Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, pp.140, 204-5, 223, 623. On the “objectively real-possible,” “concrete utopia” and “abstract utopia,” Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, 145-6, 232, 235-241.

²⁴ Kebede Mikael, የዕውቀት ብልጭታ (Addis Abeba:Meta Printing, 1999), pp. 118-120.

²⁵ Wolf Leslaw, *Concise Dictionary of Ge’ez* (Weisbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2010), p.48; Desta Tekle Weld, መፅሐፈ ሰዋስው ወግስ ወመዝገበ ቃላት ሓዲስ (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press 1958 EC).

²⁶ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.*, pp. 107 ff. English translations are mine.

²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p.7.

²⁸ Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 229-259

²⁹ Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, *op. cit.*, Translators’ Introduction, p. XXV11.

³⁰ Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, *op. cit.*, p. 1288; Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Paul P. Henze, *A History of Ethiopia: Layers of Time* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000).

³¹ Lalibela tells his workers, “You who are all gathered together here, tell me what wages you want to help build these churches which God has ordered me to erect; let every man, stone mason and excavator of the soil alike, inform me as to the wage which he requires. Speak up, all of you, and what you ask of me I will give you so that you will not say that I made you work against your will, for I do not want your labour to be without recompense nor that you should murmur” Richard Pankhurst, ed., *The Ethiopian Royal Chronicles* (Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers, 2010), p.12; Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 287-295.

³² Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.* pp. 300-320.

³³ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op. cit.* p. 298.

³⁴ Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op. cit.* pp. 300-320.

³⁵ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.*, pp.122, 158, italics added; Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, pp. 315-317, 1288; Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity* (New York: Verso Books, 2009).

³⁶ Welde Tsadiq Tekle Giorgis, ፍካሬ ኢየሱስ (Addis Adaba, ኤዞፕያ 2013), pp. 118-9.

³⁷ Welde Tsadiq Tekle Giorgis, ፍክሬ ኢየሱስ , pp. 118-9. Some cases among many others: Bahtawi Fekade-Selassie Tesfaye, shot dead at St. Estifanos Church by government forces, Bahtawi Gebre-Meskel Haile-Meskel and Bahtawi Sofonias Gume, imprisoned by the government, were known, like all *bahtawis*, for preaching that it was a sin for the government to oppress the people. Ethiopian Human Rights Council <https://ehrc.org> 1997. Amnesty International,

<https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/amnesty/1998/en/23332> 1998.

³⁸ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Utopia*, *op. cit.*, pp.1235-1241.

³⁹ Quoting Marx's critique of religion. Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Classics 1992), p. 244.

⁴⁰ Elleni Centime Zeleke, *Ethiopia in Theory*, (Boston: Brill, 2019), p.179.

⁴¹ Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 247-264.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Pp. 373-446.

⁴³ Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, pp. xxvii, 9, 144.

⁴⁴ *sineñ* (ሰንኸ) is the *qiné* hermeneutical term for a line from a poem or a song.

⁴⁵ Mandingo Afework, *Tizita* . <https://ethiozeima.com/2009/01/15/afar-madingo-afework/>

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. V. W. Mcgee, eds. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press,1986), 121.

⁴⁷ Birhanu Gebeyehu, የአማራጽ ሥነ ግጥም (Addis Ababa: Gemgem General Business, 1999); Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, chapters 1-6.

⁴⁸ Ezra Abate, "Ethiopian Kiñit (scales) Analysis of the formation and structure of the Ethiopian scale system," *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, (Trondheim 2009), pp.1213-1224). I treat *tizita* as a song.

⁴⁹ Moges Seyoum, ታላቆ ኢትዮጵያዊ ሊቅ ቅዱስ ያረድና የዘማው ታሪክ ከነምልክቱ (Arodyon Books, 2017); Timkehet Teffera, "Canvassing Past Memories through "Təzəta," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* , December, Vol. 46 (2013), pp. 31- 66.

⁵⁰ Francis Falceto, *Tezeta, Ethiopian Blues & Ballads* Buda Musique Series, vol 10, 2007.

⁵¹ Moges Seyoum, ታላቆ ኢትዮጵያዊ ሊቅ ቅዱስ ያረድና የዘማው ታሪክ ከነምልክቱ (Arodyon Books, 2017); Jolanta Kossakowska. " Music of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as Heritage of Saint Yared," *Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures* (Hamburg: Hamburg University), no 32, (2003), pp. 5-65.

⁵² Timkehet Teffera "The Masinqo: Its Meaning, Role and its Multi-Functionality in Song and Dance," https://www.academia.edu/19744348/Timkehet_Teffera_2015

⁵³ Ashenafi Kebede, "The Bowl-Lyre of Northeast Africa. Krar: The Devil's Instrument," *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 21, 3 (Sep. 1977), pp. 379-395.

⁵⁴ On a list of religious feast days in Ethiopia, <https://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/calendar.html>; on church attendance, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/08/orthodox-christians-are-highly-religious-in-ethiopia-much-less-so-in-former-soviet-union/>

⁵⁵ Ashenafi Kebede, “Zemenawi Muzika: Modern Trends in Traditional Secular Music of Ethiopia,” *The Black Perspective in Music*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Autumn, 1976), p.296 (pp. 289-301).

⁵⁶ Kuku Sebsebe, <https://ethiozeima.com/2010/02/15/tizita-%E2%80%93kuku-sebsibe/>

⁵⁷ On ዘይቤ, *zäybé*, Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-3.

⁵⁸ Bezawork, <https://ethiozeima.com/2011/12/12/tizita-bezawork-asfaw/>

⁵⁹ Kuku Sebsebe, *Tizita*, <https://ethiozeima.com/2010/02/15/tizita-%E2%80%93kuku-sebsibe/>

⁶⁰ Ernst Bloch. *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

⁶¹ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስተፋኖስ, *op.cit.*, p. 268 ff.

⁶² Ernst Bloch. *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

⁶³ Debebe Seyfu, የብርሃን ፍቅር (Addis Ababa: Hassab Publishers 1980), p. 103.

⁶⁴ Simon May, *Love: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 21ff.

⁶⁵ Étienne Balibar, *Equaliberty. Political Essays* (Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2014), pp. 35-65.

⁶⁶ For socio-economic inequalities that are on the increase in liberal democratic societies, consult the publications of <https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality/>. The publication of the American Economic Association, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.34.4.3>. As well as <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rising-inequality-a-major-issue-of-our-time/> Accessed. 4/24/2025.

⁶⁷ Étienne Balibar, *Equaliberty*, *op.cit.*, p. 4

⁶⁸ Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 20.

⁶⁹ Étienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.46-8. Jairus Banaji, “The Fictions of Free Labour: Contract, Coercion, and So-Called Unfree Labour,” *Historical Materialism*, volume 11:3 (2003) pp.69–95.

⁷⁰ On the liberal conception of fraternity, John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 90. Rawls ties fraternity to the Difference Principle and thus confines it to liberalism’s acceptance of capitalism, and therefore of its systemic inequality, as the economic foundations of liberal democracy/ He writes, “The Difference Principle, however, does seem to correspond to a natural meaning of fraternity: namely, to the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off.” p.90. *Equaliberty’s fraternity* contests the correspondence Rawls draws between “the Difference Principle” and the “natural meaning of fraternity.”

⁷¹ Debebe Seyfu, የብርሃን ፍቅር, op. cit., p.105. “አንዳች የፍቅር ዐዋይ የትግባር ጥረትሽ፣ በልቤው የፀደቀች ቅዋሚ ሓውልትሽ / ለወገኔ ፊሬ ላንች መታሰብያሽ” (love’s strength and duty have built their sacred monument in my heart to those who stand with me so that you are remembered.)

⁷² Mahmoud-Ahmed, <https://ethiozeima.com/2010/02/10/tizita-%E2%80%93mahmoud-ahmed/>

⁷³ Bezawork Asfaw, *Tizita*, <https://ethiozeima.com/2011/12/12/tizita-bezawork-asfaw/>

⁷⁴ Tilahun Gessesse, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLN0VqB0AGo>

⁷⁵ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., p. 200

⁷⁶ Samson Zema, *Tizita*, <https://www.boomplay.com/lyrics/91422410>.

⁷⁷ I am adopting Mbembe’s definition of necropolitics. Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), p.92.

⁷⁸ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press 2016).

⁷⁹ Telling examples are aphorisms such as *yäne bite* (የኔ ብጤ) and *säw läsäw mädhanitu* (ሰው ለሰው መድሃኒቱ) and mutual self-help associations such as *iddir* and *iqqub*, *däbo*, discussed earlier. In speaking about the historical unconscious, I engage in a *zäräfa* of Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994). Clare O’Farrell, *Michel Foucault: The Unconscious of History and Culture*. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013) .

⁸⁰ On tacit knowledge and its influence on explicit knowledge and social practices, Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (London: Routledge, 1966). Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

⁸¹ Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia* (London: James Curry, 1991); Sergew Hable Sellassie ed.. *The Church of Ethiopia – A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Ababa, 1997. Berhanou Abebe, *Histoire de l’Éthiopie d’Axoum à la révolution*, (Paris : Maisonneuve et Larose, 1998); Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History* (Hoboken, NJ. Wiley-Blackwell, 2002).

Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, op.cit.; Paul P. Henze, *A History of Ethiopia: Layers of Time*, op. cit. On non-synchronicity, Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 108-115.

⁸² Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, op.cit.; Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: supra.*, note 80. On cultural métissage, Project Muse, *Introduction: The Politics and Aesthetics of Métissage* (Cornell University Press, 2018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.58045>. Accessed 5.8.2020.

⁸³ Bezawork Asfaw, *Tizita*, op.cit.

⁸⁴ Ernesto Che Guevara, *Man and Socialism in Cuba* (Havana, Book Institute, 1967), p. 43

⁸⁵ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ፣ በህግ አምላክ op.cit, 70, 268, 232, 250.

⁸⁶ Abe Gubegna, ሰላምታ in ስብስብ ሥራዎች (Addis Ababa: Ezop Metshaf, 2010), pp. 377-8

⁸⁷ መጽሐፈ ምሳሌ 29: 18; Proverbs 29: 18-19 KJV.

⁸⁸ Mahmoud-Ahmed, *Tizita*, op.cit.

⁸⁹ *The poet uses kăbāro as አንጻራዊ ገለጻ ዘይቤ, entsarawi gälätsa zäybé.* Metaphor com metonymy is the closest possible translation of this figure of speech from *qiné* hermeneutics. Mennasemay, *Qine Hermeneutics*, op.cit., pp. 60-3.

⁹⁰ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., p. 200.

⁹¹ On not-yet-conscious, Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., pp.11-13, 114-153. On ቅጽላ (*qisäla*), Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, op.cit., pp. 49-69.

⁹² Amharic poetry, inheritor of the *qiné* tradition has been and still is the space where there are pre-appearances of the “not yet conscious.” Some remarkable Amharic poems in this regard: . Bewqetu Syoum፣ ስብስብ ግጥሞች (Addis Ababa, 2001); Tsegaye Gebre Medhin እሳት ወይ አበባ (Addis Abeba, 1986)l Kebede Michael የቅኔ ውቤ (Addis Abeba, 1986). Alex Abraham አንፈርስም አንታደስም (Addis Abeba, 2005); Debebe Seyfu የበርሃን ፍቅር (Addis Abeba, 2013); Alemayehu Moges መልካሙ አትላጽጽ (Asmera: 1952). Abe Gubegna ስብስብ ሥራዎች (Addis Abeba: 2010); Addis Ababa University, የኮሌጅ ቀን ግጥሞች (College Day Poems): Bole Printing Press. Addis Ababa. 2000; Chris Beckett and Alemu Tebeje , *Songs We Learn from Trees* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2020) ; Tadesse A, Ali Jam, eds., *Silence is not golden: a Critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature* (New Jersey: The Red Sea Press,1995). Melakneh Mengistu, “Resistance and Representation in Amharic Folk Poetry (1889-1974),” *Cultural and Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2018), pp. 131-148.

⁹³ Quoted in Yohannes Admasu, ቅኝ ጌታ የፍታሔ ንጉሴ (Addis Abeba: Addis Ababa University Press, 2007), p..41

⁹⁴ On not-yet-become, Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., pp. pp.11-13, 114-153.

⁹⁵ Betty G. አዲስ ሰማይ, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAMKcNS949g>.

⁹⁶ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., p. 75. Italics in the original.

⁹⁷ Katie Stockdale, *Hope Under Oppression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁹⁸ Mahmoud-Ahmed, *Tizita*, op.cit.

⁹⁹ On non-contemporaneity of the contemporary Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, op.cit.

¹⁰⁰ Madingo Afework. *Tizita*, <https://ethiozeima.com/2009/11/08/tizeta-%E2%80%93madingo-afework/>

¹⁰¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings, 1921-1926* , (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), p.19.

¹⁰² Mikael Belayneh, *tizita*, <https://ethiozeima.com/2011/12/12/tibeb-new-tizita-mikael-belayneh/>

¹⁰³ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, op.cit., p. 7, 146, 1380

¹⁰⁴ Mikael Belayneh, *Tizita*, op.cit.

¹⁰⁵ Ernst Bloch. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), pp. 1-17.

¹⁰⁶ *The Essential Rumi*, trans. Coleman Burks (Edison: Castle Books, 1997), p.142. “Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the bandaged place. That's where the light enters you.”

¹⁰⁷ Tilahun Gessesse, *Tizita* , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLN0VqB0AGo>

¹⁰⁸ Maimire Mennasemay, *Surplus History: Another Ethiopia is Possible* (Addis Ababa & Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishing, 2025). Forthcoming. The repressed Ethiopian emancipatory anticipations, ideas, values, and practices, though denied by and excluded from the hegemonic history of Ethiopia, are present as the emancipatory past that could have taken place but has been repressed and has not taken place and haunt Ethiopian society, sometimes breaking through the temporality of the hegemonic order as uprisings that the regime represses often violently. From Amde Seyon 1 (1314-1344) to the present Prosperity Party regime (2018...) local protests and uprisings have been violently repressed. Surplus history is the domain of the repressed emancipatory aspirations of Ethiopians.

¹⁰⁹ Bezawork Asfaw, *Tizita*, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁰ “I would prefer not to.” Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11231>.

¹¹¹ Daydreams could carry expressions of the desire for an alternative society. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-103,

¹¹² Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, 231; Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics* *op.cit.*, pp. 300-319

¹¹³ Ibid, 216.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 122

¹¹⁵ Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Royal Chronicles*, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005.), p.114. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, *op.cit.*; Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*: *op.cit.*, note 80

¹¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*,, p.111.

¹¹⁹ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987* (London” Cambridge University Press 1993), pp. 31-60.

¹²⁰ Bezawork's *Tizita*, *op.cit.* See discussion of this part of Bezawork's *tizita* in the section below.

¹²¹ Mandingo Afewerk, *Tizita*, *op.cit.*

¹²² See footnote 1.

¹²³ Dagmawi Woubshet, “*Tizita*: a New World Interpretation,” *Callaloo*, vol 32, 2 (2009), pp. 629-634.

¹²⁴ Timkehet Teffera, “Canvassing Past Memories through "Təzəta," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* , December, Vol. 46 (2013), pp. 31- 66. Though interesting, it is not clear how the knowledge of the

etymology and history of the English word “nostalgia” could throw light on the meaning of the Amharic word *tizita* whose linguistic and historical roots have no relations with the English word.

¹²⁵ Timkehet Teffera, “Canvassing Past Memories through “Təzəta,” *op.cit.*, pp. 42-3.

¹²⁶ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 41.

¹²⁷ Svetlana Boym, p. xiii, 41 ff, 350.

¹²⁸ Asafa Jalata, “The Concept of Oromummaa and Identity Formation in Contemporary Oromo Society” (2007); https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=utk_socopubs. Asafa Jalata, “Promoting and Developing Oromummaa” (2012). https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_socopubs/83. Asafa Jalata, *The Oromo Movement and Imperial Politics: Culture and Ideology in Oromia and Ethiopia* (Lexington Books, 2005). Asafa Jalata, *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy* (Trenton, NJ. Red Sea Press, 1998).

¹²⁹ Desta Tekle Weld, መፅሐፈ ሰዋስው ወግስ ወመዝገብ ቃላት ሓዲስ (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press 1958 EC), p.420.

¹³⁰ አማርኛ መዝገብ ቃላት (Addis Ababa: Addis Abeba University Press, 1993), p. 271; it also refers to a musical scale or *kiñit* (ቅኝት). I do not discuss *tizita* as *qiñit*.

¹³¹ On spaces of experience and horizons of expectation, Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 255-275.

¹³² Francois Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p.74.

¹³³ Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_MourningAndMelancholia.pdf. pp.243-258. Emphasis added.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 244-5.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 243. Freud writes, “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of a pathological disposition. It is also well worth notice that, although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition.”

¹³⁶ Bezawork's *tizita*, *op.cit.*

¹³⁷ This is what Hartog calls the “heroic regime of historicity,” Francois Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, *op.cit.*, pp. 28-32

¹³⁸ Maimire Mennasemay, *Qiné Hermeneutics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 460-4.

¹³⁹ Getatchew Haile, ደቂቅ እስጢፋኖስ, *op.cit.*, pp. 95, 105-15, 120-38, 141-3, 157-62, 171-3, 191-6, 201-4, 208-15, 268.

¹⁴⁰ Mandingo Afewerk, *Tizita* . <https://ethiozeima.com/2009/01/15/afar-madingo-afework/>